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THE NIBELUNGEN OF WAGNER

BY

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THESIS

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CONTENTS

Preface 5
Introduction 7
1. Rheingold 11
2. Walkuere 19
3. Siegfried 31
4. Goetterdaemmerung 46
Conclusion 70
Vita 73

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PREFACE

The following chapters are from a somewhat more extensive study made by the writer on the general subjects of "The Nibelungen of Wagner, Fouqué, Raupach and Hebbel." The work was started under the advice and direction of the late Professor Gustav E. Karsten. When his untimely death deprived the writer of his help, Professor O. E. Lessing undertook the task of adviser, and the work was finished under his direction. The writer is indebted also for help to Professor N. C. Brooks and Dr. Joseph Wiehr.

Katherine Layton.

INTRODUCTION

Tho the literature upon Wagner's *Nibelungen Ring* is so extensive that it seems almost preposterous to add anything more, yet we find that most critics have approached it in the spirit of worshipers or of bitter enemies, or if they have chosen a more moderate course have not, as a rule, made the minute examination of details that I have attempted. Some critics approach the subject from the standpoint of mythology and praise or condemn everything from that point of view. Others consider the central thought of the story and accept the incidents as bearing it out, without always considering whether that is really the case or whether the means to it are dramatic or epic in their mode of development—or even consistent from any point of view.

Drews' metaphysical interpretation is ingenious and on the whole impartial. He recognizes the combined influence of Feuerbach, Hegel and Schopenhauer (as Lichtenberger represents his view of life as a combination of optimism, pessimism, Greekism and asceticism) and notes consequent discrepancies; but on the whole he regards Wagner as a marvelous intuitive philosopher. He reduces the characters to mere abstract terms, however, [1]attempting to justify the drama from the standpoint of philosophy with more or less success, but his arguments do not justify the Tetralogy as a work of art, nor do his explanations make the characters more appealing, it seems to me.

Chamberlain (*Das Drama Richard Wagner's* p. 113) insists upon the dramatic progress of the tragedy of soul, but while he explains some passages very well, he hardly seems to me to make clear the dramatic progress of the whole. If the drama is not one of action, nevertheless, those actions that occur should be consistent with the characters and with each other—with the general plan—instead of keeping us in chaos. His explana-

[1]cf. *Der Ideengehalt von Wagner's Ring des Nibelungen*, 55-56 ff.

tion of musical motivation (pp. 104/5) as also that of Lavignac, seems to me to be merely descriptive without explaining the "how"—it is contemporaneous with the action and does not show a causal relation, tho it may produce atmosphere or perhaps call up a series of pictures. I refer to such a series of motifs as: "jealousy," 'fear" or the "curse motif" (cited by Lichtenberger, p. 332, in *Richard Wagner als Dichter und Denker*) introduced, for example, upon Siegfried's arrival at court, which furnishes only a kind of romantic motivation, or atmosphere.

Without any preconceived notion of what the result was to be, I have tried to examine the details minutely to see what the investigation would bring forth. My point of view has been purely that of dramatic development, excluding any consideration of music—a point of view that may seem unfair to Wagner but grants, nevertheless, his musical genius. Some critics admit that his work has not literary value aside from the music, but not all critics do so, and Wagner himself in his *Einleitung zu einer Vorlesung der Goetterdaemmerung* wished to submit it to the tests of a piece of literature, or rather even of a drama.

I have tried to be as objective as possible, attempting to decide whether Wagner really attained the results he desired. I have not read into the operas things contained in mythology or elsewhere or accepted things as dramatically justifiable because they are in mythology or form a part of Wagner's philosophy, without having sufficient reason or organic development within the drama itself. Adverse criticism has in cases been painful to me, but I have not avoided it, if it seemed the fair one. After all, Wagner's fame rests, or should rest, upon his music rather than upon his literary efforts. As a perfectly uncritical reader, some years ago, before the Northern mythology was at all familiar to me, I perused the Tetralogy as a story and felt that some new sources of information concerning the old story in the *Nibelungen Lied* were opened to me. I found the naive and sunny character of Siegfried particularly pleasing and the relation between Wotan

and Brünnhilde lending new charm and comprehension to the story. I was at that time, however, often baffled in interpreting or following the development of the story, and find the same fact is true after close study of the dramas and considerable reading of mythology and of critics. If, however, the work is to stand as an effective drama, it should do so without necessitating resort to mythology or any outside research. It should not lack clearness and simplicity—consistency.

The test that I have applied for the most part has been that of dramatic motivation, without consideration of other poetical or non-poetical qualities. By motivation I mean the dramatic development of action and of character from cause to effect, with the interdependence and interaction of character and circumstances or events, requiring the characters to be a logical or consistent development, or at least to *seem* psychologically probable. The action must spring from the characters. It may, for example, be a matter of doubt whether Siegfried is always as naive as his environment would lead one to expect. We find also that Wagner resorts to miracles or to the interference of a god when the desired results cannot be developed from the course of events or from the characters. Perhaps you may say that a god can make things to suit himself, but the actions of a character should seem natural if the character is to seem human or lifelike; and the character of Wotan is inconsistent.

Tho Wagner said that the music was to express in another way that expressed in the words, yet we find that his conception of motivation placed a heavy burden upon music. He mistakes a series of *"Motive"* for motivation, tho he protests that it it is not necessary to be logical but that he reaches the same end through direct appeal to the feelings. This substitution destroys the value of the Ring as a drama. Schiller, in his preface to the*Braut von Messina* gave to the chorus the function of expressing reflection, as in the Greek drama, to lead the hearer from the specific to the general and by comments on past and future to teach the

lessons of wisdom. Wagner goes farther, however, than this and devolves upon instrumental music the function of motivation itself as well as reflection. In his preface (Werke IX, p. 309) he says: "Die Musik ist es nun, was uns, indem sie unablässig die innersten Motive der Handlung in ihrem verzweigten Zusammenhange uns zur Mitempfindung bringt, zugleich ermächtigt eben diese Handlung in drastischer Bestimmtheit vorzuführen: da die Handelnden über ihre Beweggründe im Sinne des reflektirenden Bewusztseins sich uns nicht auszusprechen haben, gewinnt hierdurch ihr Dialog jene naive Präzision, welche das wahre Leben des Dramas ausmacht. Hatte die antike Tragödie hiergegen den dramatischen Dialog zu beschränken, weil sie ihn zwischen die Chorgesänge, von diesen losgetrennt, einstreuen muszte, so ist nun dieses urproduktive Element der Musik, wie es in jenen, in der Orchestra ausgeführten, Gesängen dem Drama seine höhere Bedeutung gab, unabgesondert vom Dialog im modernen Orchester, dieser gröszten künstlerischen Errungenschaft unserer Zeit, der Handlung selbst stets zur Seite, wie es, in einem tiefen Sinne gefaszt, die Motive aller Handlung selbst gleichwie in ihrem Mutterschooze verschlieszt." From this, as from his change of original conception and plan of the work, results in part, no doubt, Wagner's lack of clearness to the average hearer, though it may be a matter of doubt whether in some cases the ideas in his own mind were clear or consistent.

Rheingold

Scene I.

In the first scene of Wagner's *Rheingold* the motivation of action and character is consistent, the one interacting upon the other. The sensual Alberich gazes at the alluring Rhine maids in their play and is anxious to gain possession of one of them. In their playfulness and contempt for him they like to tease him, and they rouse him to such fury by their final spurning that he is in the mood for the renunciation of love. On the other hand the vehemence of his pursuit puts the maids off their guard and makes them careless of their secret since they mistake for love his sensual passion—or, indeed, have that conception of love. That the dwarf himself should make a distinction, as he does, between love and lust is perhaps rather much to expect of his character. However, he is clever enough to do so, even if he has not the nobility we should expect of one who understands love in its higher sense. The final disclosure of the secret is motivated by Alberich's spiteful contempt of their treasure as E. v. Hagen points out. [1] In a bit of pique, or rather to impress the dwarf and make him feel what he is foregoing, the maids tell the secret intrusted to them by their father: "Der Welt Erbe/ Gewänne zu eigen,/ wer aus dem Rheingold/ schüfe den Ring,/ der maszlose Macht ihm verlieh'."

I can hardly agree with Meinck's answer (p. 27) [2] to Julian Schmidt's objection. [3] Schmidt says, "Das Wunderliche ist, dasz der Ring sein Versprechen gar nicht hält: er soll den Weltbesitz garantieren und garantiert nicht einmal seinen eigenen Besitz," etc. Meinck's answer is this: "Es wird also dem aus dem Golde gefertigten Ringe eine weit höhere Bedeutung beigemessen, als

[1] *Die erste Scene des Rheingold*, pp. 59-66.

[2] The references to Meinck are to *Die sagenwissenschaftlichen Grundlagen* unless otherwise stated.

[3] *Preuszische Jahrbücher* 1876, p. 428.

dem Golde selber, da dem Schmied des Kleinodes die höchste Macht und die Weltherrschaft in Aussicht gestellt wird. Aber wohlgemerkt: bloss in Aussicht gestellt, nichts weiter," etc. To me, however, it seems a plain statement of fact. It accords with Wagner's own statement in *Nibelungenmythus*, p. 156, [1]and his letter to Liszt, November 20, 1851, where he quotes the maids indirectly. The improbability of the achievement of the power is due merely to that of the making of the ring. "Der Vater sagt' es/ und uns befahl er klug zu hüten/ den klaren Hort,/ dasz kein Falscher der Flut ihn entführte," etc.

This additional evidence would prevent the supplying of a *wohl* that, as Dr. Karsten suggested to me, we might perhaps otherwise suppose to be omitted in the second line through poetic license. We can hardly regard this revelation as in the nature of an oracle, either, from the real grief of the maids upon the loss of the gold—at least *they* have understood the statement as true and their father would hardly have had any motive in deceiving them. Rather, he has wished to impress them with the importance of their watch. Their own sincerity as far as this is concerned is evidenced by their concern thruout the drama; for the emphasis is always placed upon the restoration of innocence. Fricka's reproach: "Von dem Wassergezücht/ mag ich nichts wissen:/ schon manchen Mann/—mir zum Leid—/ verlockten sie buhlend im Bad," can hardly destroy their integrity as far as their trust was concerned, especially in as much as Fricka speaks at a time when she is anxious that the treasure shall come to the gods. That the statement does not seem in keeping with saga does not disprove it. For Wagner does not always trouble himself to be true to saga—nor might that always be necessary—and the very point I wish to emphasize is that he is not always true to his idea—does not always give us a coherent connection.

This promise, however, would not necessarily apply to the other possessors of the ring (tho it might), since only Alberich

[1]References to Wagner's works are to the *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*. 3. Aufl. Lpz. 1883.

produced it, thru the renunciation; only he fulfilled the condition for making it. That Alberich never gained this power must remain a fault in the carrying out of the motivation. On the other hand the destruction that followed in the wake of the ring did not follow from this cursing of love but from the curse placed upon it by Alberich. Some motivation for this destruction is, however, present here in the fact that here Alberich makes distinction between love and desire and is not debarred from the possibility of a son. This destruction, however, would have been inevitable any way to all of the enemies of Alberich in as much as Alberich was desirous of world power and would have overthrown them if he had kept the ring (by enemies we understand the possessors of that power which Alberich was seeking). According to this the fall of Wotan would not rest entirely on his own lust for power but would be from a more external cause—unless it be supposed that Wotan's sin, and consequent weakness, is a step in the fulfillment of the promise of Alberich. That this may be one conclusion is supported by Alberich's speech (sc. 3): "mit gold-'ner Faust/ euch Göttliche fang' ich mir alle!/ Wie ich der Liebe abgesagt,/ Alles was lebt/ soll ihr entsagen:/ mit Golde gegiert,/ nach Gold nur sollt noch ihr gieren."

Scene II.

The motivation of the second scene as it works out in the subsequent progress of the play is not easy to understand, and it may be open to doubt as to whether it was clearly conceived in Wagner's mind. At any rate he fails to be coherent. We have a bewildering crossing of motives that operate part of the time and part of the time fail.

At the opening of the scene we find Wotan dreaming of a castle that has been built by the giants—a castle that he has desired in order that he might gain power, and that Fricka has desired in order that she might keep her wayward husband at home. To gain this power Wotan has, thru the advice of Loge and rely-

ing upon him for ransom, endangered the Goddess of Love and Youth and thru her the existence of the gods. Now that the structure is in readiness, however, we learn that Wotan had no intention of being true to his contract and upon contract his power and security rest: "Was du bist,/ bist du nur durch Verträge:/ bedungen ist,/ wohl bedacht deine Macht." Thru this act, then, Wotan finds himself on the way to destruction whatever the turn of affairs. If he is untrue to contract he destroys confidence in himself, arouses enmity and loses power: "all deinem Wissen fluch' ich,/ fliehe weit deinen Frieden," says Fasolt; and Fricka: "Sieh, wie dein Leichtsinn/ lachend uns allen/ Schimpf und Schmach erschuf." If, on the other hand, Wotan gives up the goddess, he sacrifices immortality. Here then lies the curse upon the god, for his fate is apparently already sealed without the curse of the ring. The situation, however, brings him into subjection to the curse, in that he must turn about him for a way of escape and in so doing seeks the very thing that will bring his ruin: illegitimate gain. It is not because of but thru the cursed ring, then, that he is to come to grief, unless some preventing force is brought to bear. (Wagner says in his letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854, that "Alberich and his ring would have been powerless to harm the gods had they not themselves been susceptible to evil.")

On the other hand, quite aside from his own predicament, it seems necessary that Wotan should gain the ring. Loge tells the gods of Alberich's renunciation of love, of his successful forging of the ring and consequent ability to gain power over the world. The gods, therefore, as well as the giants see their own safety threatened: "Zwang uns allen schüfe der Zwerg würd' ihm der Reif nicht entrissen." Meinck (p. 27) says that Loge's statement: "doch, ward es zum runden Reife geschmiedet,/ hilft es zu höchster Macht,/ gewinnt dem Manne die Welt,"/ is not to be trusted because of Loge's treacherous character. Why then does Loge advise the return of the ring to the Rhine maids?

Is it because he feels sure the gods will not return it, any way, or because he realizes that to do so would be futile? For in that case how should Wotan satisfy the giants and regain possession of Freia? Or are we to suppose that the giants would have been satisfied with the gold if only the wonder-working ring were not in the hands of an enemy? We can hardly accept that view, knowing the greedy character of the giants and Fafner's remark upon hearing Loge's account of the significance of the ring. Fafner says: "Glaub' mir, mehr als Freia/ frommt das gleiszende Gold:/ auch ew'ge Jugend erjagt,/ wer durch Goldes Zauber sie zwingt." True, he showed himself stupid afterwards and put his treasure to no use, but he would not yield an iota of his possession, even killing Fasolt to gain all. [1]

Scene III.

In the third scene we see the progress of Alberich's plans, with his subject band collecting for him wealth. He has not only the ring with which he has produced terror and subjection, but he has forced the unwilling Mime to forge for him the Tarnhelm—arousing the terror and envy of the smith and the desire not only to be free but to be master of Alberich. In the meantime Alberich's pride in his achievement and desire for display make him unwary even of the wily Loge whom he instinctively distrusts. The latter plays upon his confidence and vanity by an assumed wonder and incredulity and, repeating the scheme of Puss in Boots, captures the dwarf in the form of a toad.

The scene may perhaps be thought of as symbolical of the power of gold to increase itself, the effect of successful greed upon character and the unwariness that a too rapid success may bring with it—a scene, however, difficult on the stage.

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[1] cf. also Wagner's letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854: "But it is only quite at the end that Wotan realizes this (that the curse can be removed only by the restoration of he gold to Nature), when he himself has reached the goal of his tragic career, what Loge had fortold him in the beginning with a touching insistence, the god consumed by ambition had ignored," etc.

Scene IV.

In the last scene of the *Vorspiel* we have the completion of the third, separated from it for stage reasons: Alberich's ransom, as in the *Dietrich*-and *Völsunga-saga* and *Edda*, and the consequent curse of the ring: "Gab sein Gold nur—Macht ohne Masz, nun zeug' sein Zauber Tod dem—der ihn trägt; Dem Tode verfallen, feszle den Feigen die Furcht; des Ringes Herr als des Ringes Knecht: bis in meiner Hand den geraubten wieder ich halte!" From a psychological standpoint the curse should affect only the one who has provoked it, or if a later owner of the gold, then this owner must hold it as a guilty possession, conscious of an injustice, a wrong that he must make right if he is to free from its effect. For the effect of the curse can be only symbolic of the effect of guilt upon one's mind and destiny. (Concerning Wotan's share in it see p. 14, l. 13 ff.) The curse of the gold recalls Phryxus' curse of the golden fleece in Grillparzer's *Das goldene Vliesz*.[1] There, however, the securing of the fleece is connected with a grave crime, and the perpetrator, Aietes, feels the pangs of guilt—horror from the curse overcomes him. The effect of the curse thruout the cycle is connected with inner as well as outer struggle. The curse which pursues its victim is in harmony with the act by which the fleece is obtained or with the attitude with which it is regarded because of its associations (e. g. by Medea:) Wotan, according to our feeling, committed a wrong in taking the ring, but there is a great contrast between the dramatic greatness of the representation by Grillparzer and the effect of paltryness in Wagner's scene. The same difference is noticeable, too, in Wagner's representation of guilt (if we accept that interpretation of Erda's appearance.) There the spectator feels only the strangeness of the mystic appearance and is not moved by—cannot in any way adequately grasp,—the moral struggle of Wotan. The method of representation is purely artificial and weak.

In the latter part of the scene we have the paying of the

[1]For a comparison of Grillparzer's *Vliesz* and Wagner's Ring, see Karl Landmann's article in the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Litteraturgeschichte*, 1891.

ransom in a spectacular manner, and the demand of the ring to fill the last aperture in the heap, an incident based on the filling of the otter skin in the *Edda*. Wotan refuses to heed Loge's admonition and yields only to the warning of Erda. Her appearance on the scene has been a puzzle to critics. Golther (p. 30)[1] says, "Eine düstre, schwüle Schuldstimmung ist durch Erdas Warnung in Wotans Seele gelegt." I can see only a symbolical and artificial representation of Wotan's worry and fear (cf. *Siegfried* p. 155) as an echo of Alberich's curse. The injunction to avoid the ring is useless: "Weiche, Wotan, weiche!/ flieh' des Ringes Fluch!/ Rettungslos/ dunklem Verderben/ Weiht dich sein Gewinn," and again: "Ein düsterer Tag/ dämmert den Göttern:/ dir rath' ich, meide den Ring." Wotan is not avoiding it, however, when he is giving in payment and its return to the Rhine has been discussed (p. 14, l. 33 and p. 15, ll. 2-8.) This incident serves perhaps, nevertheless, as the first thread in his later renunciation.

For the progress of the story we have hints of further plans on the part of Wotan, and hints of the approaching fall of the gods and of the true intent of Loge, as also, in the lament of the Rhine maids, a further impression of the effect of the theft and the necessity of its return to the Rhine.

This motive of the return of the gold to the Rhine is most confusing. In the *Rheingold* while we feel its necessity, it seems fruitless as a means of expiation, while later we have the impression that it will be effective and then thru an arbitrary turn of Wotan's character find that it is not. Wagner in his letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854, says: "Certainly the downfall of the gods is no necessary part of the drama regarded as a mere contrapunktal nexus of motives.... No, the necessity for this downfall had to arise out of our own deepest convictions, as it did with Wotan." But should not our convictions be grounded in the play itself, if the play is to have any purpose or value?

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[1]Unless otherwise stated the reference to Golther are to *Die sagegeschichtlichen Grundlagen.*

In the motivation of Wotan's character, Wagner has deprived the god of all dignity, of all inspiration of sympathy. There is, of course a mythological basis for his sin and wickedness, but we should be very grateful to Wagner if he had elevated the character and made it more worthy of a hero. While Odin's plight in the *Edda* is ridiculous when he and Loki are held prisoner for the killing of the otter, Odin does not himself descend to the indignity of any part in the trapping of the dwarf. According to the impression given in the translations of the *Edda* by Simrock, Ettmüller and others, the story does not imply any sin in the killing of the otter as such, tho to the Germanic mind it might so appeal. This interpretation is, of course, necessary to the idea of Wagner's dramas. However, it is difficult to see anything heroic in Wotan's character, such as one would expect from a god or even a mortal hero who is to inspire our sympathy. He is not only wicked, but he is petty—small. He is false from the beginning, grasping, indifferent to the rights or feelings of others. And to attain what? A mere selfish end, without noble ideal or purpose.

Walkuere

Act I., Scene I.

The progress of the drama, *Walkuere*, consists in the introduction of Siegmund into the home of Hunding, and the instinctive sympathy between Siegmund and Sieglinde thru their common suffering and thru the former's appearance of valor—for we learn later that Sieglinde has been expecting a deliverer since Wotan's appearance with the sword.

Scene II.

In the second scene we feel the approaching collision between Siegmund and Hunding from the latter's hostile reception of the wayfaring man and soon surmise connection between it and Hunding's observation of the resemblance between his wife and his guest. Our dislike of Hunding is instinctive from his manner toward his guest and from his wife's unhappiness. From Siegmund's account of his former life we infer that Wotan has been shaping mortal affairs, is, in fact, the father of Siegmund and Sieglinde. He has evidently separated the two to bring them together here, after preparing his son, as in the *Völsungasaga* Siegmund did Sinfjötli, thru a life of hardship to free Sieglinde from her husband. We may suppose that Wotan has arranged Sieglinde's affairs, too, and thru their bond of suffering and consequent sympathy is preparing them for their love. We, of course, connect the situation with Wotan's thought at the end of *Rheingold* tho we do not yet understand the connection: "Was, mächtig der Furcht/ mein Muth mir erfand,/ wenn siegend es lebt/ leg' es den Sinn dir dar!"

The occasion for the strife between Hunding and Siegmund is offered by a conflict which the latter has just had with Hunding's kin, an account of which excites his desire for revenge. It would seem like a series of chance incidents if we did not have the

feeling that Wotan as deus ex machina is moving the characters around as so many men on a chess board. For example, it may seem a chance that Siegmund has happened to seek refuge in the home of his kidnapped sister and that, too, at a time when he has just happened to come into a conflict with Hunding's kin. The latter incident corresponds, however, with Siegmund's instinct of protection for the weak but the bringing in of so extraneous a motive now seems forced.

The story is intense and up to this point holds our sympathy for the unhappy brother and sister, but the motivation seems an external and artificial matter as far as the human characters are concerned.

The course of action does not grow entirely out of the characters themselves. Wotan is adding another link to the chain of sufferings he has caused, and it arouses our disgust if not our indignation against the god And why is it all necessary anyway? Wotan has paid his debt, has his castle and, as we learn later Fafner, having killed his brother, is idly watching his possessions without threatening the position of the gods. Alberich, too, is helpless. It may, of course, be thought of as a part of the dwarf's curse that those who do not have the ring shall desire it, that Wotan is cursed from having had possession of the ring, that, as Fafner is mortal, he must in accordance with the curse some time die and then bring danger to the gods. At least they fear so; for, as Loge tells us, they are blind; and Wotan tells us that fear has possessed his being. To Wotan, then, this continuation of the plotting seems necessary, but again his character suffers from his ruthless manipulation of his creations—a course that Wagner meant probably to illustrate the effect of love of gold. Wotan, here, as Hebbel's god, sacrifices the individual, but not that good may come to the race, merely to a personal end; or rather he creates the characters for a personal end and sacrifices them when they cannot serve him.

In his *Nibelungenmythus* Wagner speaks of a servitude un-

der which the dwarfs and Alberich himself are suffering in consequence of the ring, a servitude which it is Wotan's noble purpose to remove by causing the return of the ring to the Rhine. To that end he has been developing the human race to a high state of valor. The whole situation, however, seems a mere arbitrary choice of purpose by Wagner without logical development or connection. That the return of the gold to the Rhine should have so sweeping an effect does not grow out of the nature of affairs. Wagner means to illustrate the evil effect of the desire for gain, but the taking away of the gain does not restore men's minds to innocence, nor does a righting of wrong to the Rhine maids free others (e. g. all the possessors of the ring) from any stain of guilt unless all who have committed a wrong and come under the curse shall desire this return of the ring. The idea seems to be that the curse must fulfill itself upon all who have come into contact with the ring and that Wotan must return the ring to stop any further progress of the curse. [1]

Why, too, should Wotan create men to carry out his purpose? Because he must be true to contract? But that has not been his custom. In the *Mythus* Wagner says: "Wotan selbst kann aber das Unrecht nicht tilgen, ohne ein neues Unrecht zu begehen: nur ein, von den Göttern unabhängiger, freier Wille, der alle Schuld auf sich selbst zu laden und zu büszen im Stande ist, kann den Zaüber lösen, und in dem Menschen ersehen die Götter die Fähigkeit zu solchem freien Willen." We do not as yet in the drama have any feeling that Wotan is moved by such a desire but connect his action with the fear that came over him in *Rheingold*.—Has Wotan come to a realization that his falsity weakens his power and resolved to restore confidence by turning over a new

[1]From a mythological standpoint, too, Wagner presents a confusing mixture. Light (the gold in the Rhine) succumbs to darkness (Alberich) and then breaks forth again (snatched from Schwarz-Alberich by Licht-Alberich). Then we have a similar process again: the giant is overcome by Siegfried (son of Licht-Alberich) who wins the light (gold), tho he is himself the light. Then Siegfried is threatened by Hagen, son of Schwarz-Alberich, and finally thru death loses the light which is then, nevertheless, restored to the Rhine.).

leaf? (This confidence seems to have been lacking before his robbery of the ring as we see from Alberich's attitude upon Wotan's arrival in Nibelheim.) But is he any less false to contract by this indirect method of breaking it? Suppose, too, that man does restore the gold to the Rhine—does that bring any credit to Wotan or restore to him any respect? He should now have on his mind the misfortunes his instruments have had to bear to accomplish his purpose, but that, in the main, does not disturb him. The situation remains as it was in the *Rheingold* and there can be no further development for Wotan. He is ruined if he keeps his contract—for he can keep it only by dishonorable means, "durch Gewalt und List" according to the *Mythus* as in the drama. He is ruined, too, if he breaks it. This is evidently the feeling that Wagner has when in his last version he has Wotan will his own death. Even that, however, cannot convince one of any greatness in Wotan's character and it does not seem there to correspond with the events. It does not seem to rise from any sense of guilt on the part of Wotan (in spite of Wagner's assertion of it in the *Mythus*) but from his inability to cope with fate. On the other hand the correct mood for interpretation on the part of the hearer has not been motivated, for the hearer has the impression that fate at last has been successfully coped with. Because of the emphasis laid on the return of the gold to the Rhine; e. g. in Wotan's hope expressed to Waltraute, the naive reader certainly feels surprise and disappointment at the termination. He is torn asunder by what seems to him the incongruity of the two aims: renunciation and ransom. The correct mood is to a certain degree produced but with lapses—but perhaps this is one of the cases where music motivates!

Scene III.

In the last scene of the first act of *Walkuere* we learn Wotan's immediate tho not ultimate purpose in bringing Siegmund to Hunding's home: that he may receive a sword promised to him

when he should be in deepest distress. Wotan, moreover, has not only brought the sword but has created the distressing situation that requires it,—the need on the part of Siegmund and the feeling on the part of Sieglinde that it is destined to her rescuer and that the rescuer is Siegmund, as well as her feeling of sympathy for his distress. As the scene progresses, however, in spite of the charm of their unrestrained love and the pretty figure of spring lured by love, our sympathy grows less; for, tho Hunding has received Sieglinde from robbers as an unwilling wife, he is now a wronged man after all, and, moreover, the brother and sister knowing their relationship plight their troth. Of course, we know that Wotan is back of the scene and to some critics that is sufficient to make the scene acceptable, and they think of these simply as elemental beings who follow their impulses as a matter of course. They do not, however, seem to be naive enough, for there is too much reflection thruout the scene.

When Siegmund is alone he meditates upon Sieglinde's effect upon himself, analysing his feelings; e. g. "ein Weib sah' ich,/ wonnig und hehr;/ entzückendes Bangen/ zehret mein Herz."—etc. He speaks of stealing her from her husband, but justifies himself because of what she has to endure. Even if we are willing to accept his motive we cannot grant him naiveté. If we think of him as receiving all ideas from Wotan, the motivation seems artificial, and he remains unnatural. Just one thing mitigates in some degree Siegmund's attitude. He has been buffeted cruelly by fortune, and from Sieglinde he receives the first sympathy.

Sieglinde, too, meditates and even makes advances, but there is motivation, in that she interprets the placing of the sword in the tree as the promise of a hero to rescue her, and she thinks she recognized Waelse, her father: fänd ich ihn heut,'/ und hier, den Freund;——/ was je mich geschmerzt/ in Schand' und Schmach,—/ süszeste Rache/ sühnte dann Alles!..../ fänd' ich den heiligen Freund,/ umfing' den Helden mein Arm!"

Siegmund's musings about love and spring suggest that he realizes their own situation and do not permit us to regard him as entirely naive. He shows no surprise when Sieglinde discovers their relationship, and thruout meditates upon the passion of his love. There is, too, much of the spirit of following their desires in spite of the situation. Sieglinde says at last: "Bist du Siegmund,/ den ich hier sehe—/ Sieglinde bin ich,/ die dich ersehnt:/ die eig'ne Schwester/ gewannst du zueins mit dem Schwert!"

And Siegmund replies: "Braut und Schwester/ bist du dem Bruder—/ so blühe denn Wälsungen-Blut!"

That Wagner should have put such a purpose in the mind of Siegmund already, however, seems out of place, and does not make the incident palatable. This truly is not the kind of love we should think of as a factor in the redemption of the world. Wotan's plan, however, as far as the action of the drama shows, is still a selfish one. In view of so much reflection I cannot agree with Meinck (pp. 191-4) who quotes also from v. Hagen:[1] "der Liebe zwischen Siegmund und Sieglinde ist durch den höchsten Grad der Individualisation der Wahl jede Sinnlichkeit benommen," nor has Wagner treated it so skillfully that we may excuse it thru the old nature myth. It does not seem to me that the situation is made acceptable by the fact that, according to Meinck, they learn it "too late," and their heroism in saving the Wälsungen race is not felt as convincing.

Act II, Scene I.

In the second act we learn definitely that it is Wotan's purpose that has lain back of the progress of the affairs of Siegmund and Sieglinde, for he instructs Brünnhilde to give to Siegmund the victory.

Scene II.

We receive still further light upon the situation in Fricka's accusation and find it as stated above. Why Wotan yields to

[1] *Ueber die erste Rheingoldscene*, p. 37.

Fricka becomes now a question in our minds. Is his character consistent? He says he has not been wont to disturb her in her rule; but in the second scene of *Rheingold* we gather that he considered his own desire in the building of the castle and pawning of Freia first without particular regard for her feelings and again (*Walkuere II*, 2) where Fricka says: "Die treue Gattin/ trogest du stets." However, we infer that it has been his custom to try to appease her: "denn dein Weib noch scheutest du so," etc. Are we to regard Wotan's submission, then, as the settlement of a family quarrel, in pacification of an angry wife, or does he believe her statement: "Von Menschen verlacht,/ verlustig der Macht, gingen wir Götter zu Grund," etc. (This is Hunding's attitude toward Siegmund, of Wotan's race, tho we have no reason to suppose that he associates the Wälsungen race with the gods.)

From Wotan's general attitude we may believe that he is not troubled much about the sacredness of marriage: "Unheilig acht' ich den Eid/ der Unliebende eint," but that he does wish to pacify the goddess and that he perceives his deceit has been penetrated and is useless.

Accordingly he finds that Siegmund is not really the hero he requires: "Noth thut ein Held,/ der ledig göttlichen Schutzes,/ sich löse vom Göttergesetz:" etc.

The situation is certainly a painful one, but seems absurd and Wotan suffers another loss of dignity to say the least (cf. also pp. 20-22).

Scene III.

In the next scene comes the result of Wotan's reluctant promise to Fricka, in that he remands his former orders to Brünnhilde, betraying, however, his real desire. He reverts to past history, for Wagner wrote his dramas in reverse order, in consequence of which we find more or less repetition. Wotan relates Alberich's curse of love and acquisition of power, his own warning and his creation of the Valkyries, the offspring of his so-called love, to ward off the doom of the gods, his fear of Alberich if the latter should regain

the ring, his feeling then of the necessity of regaining the ring himself and his own powerlessness, a situation which has been discussed above (pp. 24-22.) He states in somewhat different terms his requirements for a hero: "Nur einer dürfte/ was ich nicht darf:/ ein Held, dem helfend/ nie ich mich neigte;/ der fremd dem Gotte,/ frei seiner Gunst,/ unbewuszt, ohne Geheisz,/ aus eigner Noth/ mit der eig'nen Wehr/ schüfe die That," etc. He must find one to fight against himself—"a friendly enemy:" "der in eig'nem Trotze/ der trauteste mir." Why all this limitation should be placed upon the hero is not clear; e. g., that it should be "unbewuszt" and that he should defy Wotan himself, unless that should be a means of proving the hero an independent force of will and Wotan in consequence free from any additional deceit or guilt concerning what he should do. The god expresses his despair of finding such a hero: "denn selbst musz der Freie sich schaffen,/ Knechte erknet' ich mir nur!" But what a ridiculous demand that the free man should create himself! Wotan's reason for yielding has been discussed above (p. 25). As another reason for his dilemma, he gives this: "Ich berührte Alberich's Ring—/ gierig hielt ich das Gold!" Here it seems somewhat strange to the reader that the curse should hold for Wotan unless he still desires the ring. That he does desire it, however, follows from his fear.

In this scene we feel more sympathy for Wotan than in any preceding it, for he says: "unwissend trugvoll übt' ich Untreue,/ band durch Verträge,/ was Unheil barg:/ listig verlockte mich Loge," etc. and "Was ich liebe musz ich verlassen,/ morden was ich je minne,/ trügend verrathen, wer mir vertraut!" He seems to be more sensible of his own guilt and to have more sympathy for his victims. However, his surrender seems sudden and weak.[1] From the action of the drama (tho we know from

[1]Chamberlain (p. 106) says, "Wotan makes the resolution impulsively, not philosophically and only with faulty consistency and insight carries out this negation and continually interrupts the course of affairs."

the *Mythus*) it is not clear what Wotan means by his work—but we suppose he refers to his dream of power and creation of men. There is nothing here to indicate that he has wished a dissolution of the curse for any other reason than to free himself from the fear of downfall, without any added magnanimity to the dwarfs such as suggested in the *Nibelungenmythus*, tho he has a pleasure in the rearing of man. That, however, was a means to a personal end.

Wotan's awaiting the end has been commented on above (p. 22). He says here: "was frommte mir eigner Wille?/ Einen Freien kann ich nicht wollen." Yet in the next drama we find him rejoicing in the freedom of Siegfried. He says also: "So nimm meinen Segen,/ Nibelungen Sohn!/ Was tief mich ekelt,/ der Gottheit nichtigen Glanz!/ zernage sie gierig dein Neid!" In the *Siegfried* he has passed his inheritance over to the hero, who has overcome the dragon and obtained the ring: "weiht' ich in wüthendem Ekel/ des Nibelungen Neid die Welt,/ dem wonnigsten Wälsung/ weis' ich mein Erbe nun an."

Another puzzle is added in this scene, tho suggested in *Rheingold*. "Wenn der Liebe finsterer Feind/ zurnend zeugt einen Sohn,/ der Seligen Ende/ säumt dann nicht!" We learn that Alberich is to have this son—but just why this is to have a more direful effect than Alberich's own malice is not clear. It seems to be merely another case of arbitrary motivation, tho perhaps Wagner meant this, as the offspring of hate, to illustrate the spreading of evil. Such an aim would not be a sufficient motivation for a dramatic plot, however. We have no feeling of any dramatic necessity.

We have in this scene some preparation for the next in Brünnhilde's attitude toward Wotan's unexpected order. She has always had Wotan's will at heart (mythologically she is thought of as the expression of his will) and has been accustomed to the role of affectionate protector of Siegmund. Now, therefore, she would be acting, she feels, contrary to Wotan's real will as well

as her personal inclination—would be guilty, in fact, of perfidy. She is very human in her sympathy for forsaken valor.

Scene IV.

In the fourth scene which brings us back to the lovers we find a feeling of guilt on the part of Sieglinde mingled with delight in her love and terror for Siegmund. On the part of Siegmund we find confidence in his sword and in his role of avenger. The scene is vivid, with a rapid movement befitting it—would be stirring if it were not marred by the revolting situation. Our sympathy stays with the lovers, nevertheless, on the whole, since we feel that Wotan is responsible for their position and now, whether by force or free will, has deserted them. The scene is interrupted by Brünnhilde, who comes apparently expecting to carry out Wotan's last command. Siegmund's devotion to Sieglinde and determination to share her unhappy lot in preference to the delights of Walhalla, however, as also the helplessness of Sieglinde win our sympathy, together with that of Brünnhilde. Now, then, the Valkyria is moved by love to Siegmund. It was a love, however, that was saving him for another and included pity for Sieglinde and her child.[1]

That Wotan's motive in yielding to Fricka was chiefly that of pacification or submission to law is further shown by his killing of Hunding, tho his immediate participation was made plausible by Brünnhilde's contempt of his authority. The death of Hunding is necessary for our feeling of justice, as also Wotan's, for his former wrong to Sieglinde, but it is a somewhat summary and convenient way of becoming rid of him.

Act III, Scene I.

The importance of the first scene of Act III in the action of

[1]Cf. also Meinck's discussion, pp. 244-7, and Wagner's statement (*Bayreuther Blätter* 1881, p. 206) that she feels "sich von einem neunen, ihr bisher fremden Element berührt, das den hehren Gleichmut in ihrer Seele ins Wanken bringt. Dr. Meinck compares the incident to that in Schiller's *Jungfrau* in which the maid spares the life of Lionel. I find more motivation here, however, in the appeal to Brünnhilde's sympathy and in the fact that Wotan has taught her to love the hero.

the drama lies in the information that Sieglinde receives from Brünnhilde concerning her son's future greatness, in the preservation and giving to her of the broken sword and the sending of Sieglinde to the forest inhabited by Fafner, for purposes of safety from Wotan in a place avoided by him. We are to suppose that Wotan feels disgust at the place from his inability to take the ring. —This incident makes it possible and natural for Mime to come to the aid of Sieglinde and have charge of Siegfried at the opening of the following drama.

Scene II.

As a natural punishment for Brünnhilde (for she is no longer Wotan's will since she has violated it) she is condemned to take on the mortal nature and fall to the lot of whoever should waken her. The tragic guilt, or necessity, in Brünnhilde here seems to me to be somewhere between that of Schiller and that of Hebbel. She has not a sense of guilt as, for example, Johanna felt it. She felt that she was carrying out her mission even in disobeying instructions and she was following her noblest impulse of pity and sacrifice for what seemed to her a noble hero and a worthy cause. On the other hand, the god's command was not to be defied and by the nature of her human view and human feeling she no longer fits into her surroundings nor may she be the trusted servant of the god.

Wotan, of course, has a tragic guilt in the sense in which Schiller conceived it, a guilt which has brought him into further entanglement, so that *now* he is the creature of circumstances and is forced to deal injustice to those he loves, as well as those he has not thought it worth while to consider. He gives here the impression of a more noble purpose tho it has not been introduced before and is not now clear. When we recall the end of *Rheingold* we may wonder whether he is not deceiving himself. Otherwise we must think that the chief growth in his characater has taken place off the stage. There has been lapse of time, to be sure, to allow for this, but not even a narrative to ac-

count for it, nor has his mode of action since his reappearance prepared us. The new motive to which I refer is suggested in the lines: "So leicht wähntest du/ Wonne der Welt erworben,/ wo brennend' Weh'/ in das Herz mir brach,/ wo gräszliche Noth/ den Grimm mir schuf,/ einer Welt zu Liebe/ der Liebe Quell/ im gequälten Herzen zu hemmen?" How does he think he is benefiting the world by the death of Siegmund? Are we to believe that he has in his heart accepted Fricka's view of the order of things, or that he foresees the events and outcome of the two following dramas? His foresight, in the latter case, varies greatly, and we do not have the feeling that he has any more inclination toward the conventional order than formerly, tho he sees himself forced to submit to it. We may perhaps think that he has come to believe that *this* law, or convention, is necessary, that he cannot escape it and must, therefore, give place to others: "Wo gegen mich selbst/ ich sehrend mich wandte,/ aus Ohnmacht, Schmerzen/ schäumend ich aufschosz, etc. Concerning this attitude comment has been made (p. 22).

That Brünnhilde should demand a fearless hero is in keeping with our conception of her and our feelings concerning her deserts. Wotan's speech: "Wer meines Speeres/ Spitze fürchtet,/ durchschreite das Feuer nie" prepares us for the later encounter with Siegfried.

Siegfried

Act I, Scene I.

In the first scene of *Siegfried* we find Mime forging for the youth a sword, in despair, however, as Siegfried has broken the preceding masterpiece. Mime has been unsuccessful in his attempt to weld the broken sword while (in part presumably from Sieglinde's disclosure to him, tho we find in his later conversation with Wotan that he knows the whole progress of events) he feels sure that this sword in the hands of Siegfried would accomplish his purpose. That is, he hopes thru Siegfried to overcome Fafner and thru him to gain possession of the Nibelungen ring (a desire aroused in the third scene of *Rheingold.*) That only this sword should accomplish the deed is an arbitrary motivation, taken from mythology, but has justification in that Siegfried, of semi-divine parentage, should find any mortal sword too fragile for his superhuman strength.

Scene II.

The second scene of *Siegfried* is expositional, giving us the characterization of Mime and Siegfried, their attitude toward each other with the reasons for it. We find that Mime has come to the aid of the unhappy Sieglinde and has received into his charge the infant Siegfried and the sword pieces. In the hope of overcoming Fafner and winning thru the boy the power-giving ring he has tried without any feeling of real affection himself to win that of Siegfried. From his very lavishness and reiteration of his care, however, the latter feels an instinctively strong antipathy, reading his character aright, as is common among children (Dr. Karsten's suggestion, in a conversation about these scenes.) By instinct they discern the difference between a real interest and a pretense. Mime has evidently fostered the lad's desire for a

sword, a desire aroused easily because of the latter's own desire for activity and dissatisfaction with his surroundings. We find the youth impatient, boisterous, craving deeds, feeling sympathy with nature of which he has been a most interested observer. The breaking of swords on the stage serves the purpose of showing this boisterousness and feeling of necessity for action while the repeated failure increases Mime's chagrin and anxiety and forms a contrast to the climax of the successful sword. The receiving of the sword pieces and the learning of his parentage lead to Siegfried's determination to leave Mime for a new and active life, a fact which increases Mime's haste to make use of him. The bear incident is episodical, tho it illustrates the lad's daring, his discontent (from which springs in part his longing to be up and away) and serves to increase Mime's fear of Siegfried and anxiety to make the sword. Mime's dilemma prepares for the next scene.

Scene III.

The value of the third scene lies, of course, in Wotan's disclosure of the secret of the welding of the sword and his announcement of the death of Mime at the hands of Siegfried. This scene has its prototype in the *Edda* but the introduction of this Germanic custom of winning shelter thru wit in giving and answering questions seemed to me at first to be merely episodical. It does not lead to Mime's determination to kill Siegfried, for that, we may suppose, he already intended for the purpose of gaining the ring. However, it seems plausible to regard the scene, as Dr. Karsten suggested, as preparatory to Mime's silly conduct in the following scene and in the sixth scene of the second act.

That the fact "that he had not learned fear" should enable an ignorant youth to forge the weapon that had baffled the skilled smith seems at first glance absurd. However, it is not unnatural that Mime's excessive eagerness and fear at so colossal a project as the killing of Fafner should only thwart his purpose, while Siegfried's confidence comes to his aid—only the daring ones

accomplish what seems impossible. Siegfried has also had some instruction. The incident of Siegfried's making the sword himself is doubtless suggested by Uhland, but not the requirement that the swordmaker should be without fear. The requirement is, of course, in keeping with that of the whole career of Siegfried, but the fact that it comes from outside instead of developing from Siegfried's own needs and desire to surmount them seems again to be rather the epic style of motivation. · Whether the hero's whole career is not, from the dramatic standpoint, somewhat artifically motivated may be questioned; for while Wotan refrains from all direct interference, do we not, nevertheless, have the impression that he gives indirect suggestion, such as that to Mime and that in the messages from the birds; that is, the prompting of those feelings or motives in Siegfried for which Wotan disclaims the responsibility and which he later combats?

The fact that the hero's career is so in harmony with Wotan's wishes leads us to expect their consummation in him.

Scene IV.

Frantic at the prospects of his own doom and yet eager that Siegfried shall win for him the ring, Mime thinks of the plan of teaching him fear in the encounter with Fafner, ostensibly to prepare the youth to go out into the world, tho he has already said to the latter: "verfallen, verlor ich's (das Haupt) an den,/ 'der das Fürchten nicht gelernt.'" Tho Siegfried after Mime's description of it naively consents to try to learn this feeling we are not to suppose him to be utterly stupid. He has no expectation of learning fear, regards Mime as a mere bungler, and thinks of this as only some more of his nonsense. We have in the lad an amusing mixture of apparent boyish docility and innate antipathy, correct intuition—a queer but charming combination. He distrusts the smith instinctively, in general, and we may feel that he has in a measure understood some of Mime's stupidly open remarks. He says "was er kocht, ich kost' es ihm nicht," tho, to be sure,

his contempt for his foster-father would be sufficient reason for his attitude without any specific fear of Mime's treachery. We may think of the lad as not knowing fear but nevertheless knowing how to avoid harm.

The splitting of the anvil is merely episodical, tho, together with the other episodes, it gives us an impression of the youth's extraordinary strength and spirit. This boisterousness has, however, been relieved by his joyousness and the tenderness of his attitude toward nature and toward his mother.

Act II, Scene I.

The second act presents a second meeting between Wotan and Alberich. (p. 76) Golther says concerning the scene: "Ernst und erhaben schreitet eine Gestalt durch dies Drama, der Wanderer," and quotes Wagner's explanation: "Wotan ist nach dem Abschied von Brünnhild in Wahrheit nur noch ein abgeschiedener Geist: seiner höchsten Absicht nach kann er nur noch *gewähren* lassen," etc. As far as any effect, then, on the following action is concerned the scene is purely episodical. We have already been told, too, of Wotan's determination to lay down his work, so that his attitude "zu schauen und nicht zu schaffen" affords no further exposition of character. It is a question whether the god rises in our esteem thru this scene, tho he no longer tries to do anything in his own interest, and ostensibly his object is in a measure to repair the wrong he has done by directing Alberich now in plans that *may* aid the latter in regaining his lost property. In spite of his suggestions to the dwarf, however, we feel conscious that Wotan knows all the time what the outcome will be and that Alberich's efforts are vain. By giving these directions, the god seeks, perhaps, to clear his conscience in the matter, but with Alberich we must regard him as showing his real feeling in his laugh at Alberich's failure to persuade Fafner. He cannot, then, to me seem so "ernst und erhaben."

It may be said that he is rightfully pleased at the failure of the power of evil, but why this mockery, then, of pretending to

further its power? Is this another example such as Hebbel speaks of when he says: "Es giebt Fälle, wo Pflicht-Erfüllen sündigen heiszt?"[1] There seems to me to be no dramatic necessity for this scene, however.

If Wotan had here succeeded in returning the ring to Alberich and righting the wrong he had done, it would, of course, have meant his own downfall in accordance with Alberich's purpose of revenge. But the case would not have been otherwise if Wotan had not done this wrong, from the consequence of Alberich's vow, a matter which has been discussed.[2]

In regard to Wotan's weakness, of which Alberich taunts him, in that he is bound by his bargains because of the runes on his spear, discussion has been offered above.[3] His spear with the runes must, naturally, be only symbolical of his power and contract. A new impression is produced here, however:[4]/ "was mit den Trotzigen/ einst du vertragen/ dess' Runen wahrt noch heut'/ deines Speeres herrischer Schaft./ Nicht du darfst/ was als Zoll du bezahlt/ den Riesen wieder entreiszen:/ du selbst zerspelltest/ deines Speeres Schaft;/ in deiner Hand/ der herrische Stab,/ der starke zerstiebte wie Spreu." Does not this imply that Wotan could now maintain his power as long as he is true to the runes, provided that Alberich is not able to take advantage of his inability by gaining the ring himself? If, then, Alberich is circumvented at last, can we say that the plot is consistent or logical? Has not Wotan, then, expiated by his torment of mind? Do we not now expect better things of him in compensation for his wickedness than mere surrender? Is it enough simply to put an end to the curse? Do we not expect him now, without the aim of his own happiness or power, to carry on the work of the world? Judging from his past, however, he is perhaps not capable of it, so that to rise to the height of the philosophy

[1]Tgb. I, 805, Friedrich Hebbel. *Sämtliche Werke.* (Werner's edition) Berlin, 1907.

[2]cf. on *Rheingold*, pp. 12-14.

[3]cf. on *Walküre*, p. 22.

[4]cf. on *Walküre*, p. 22.

of negation was the best he could do. Whatever philosophy Wagner meant to expound, his chief god certainly lacks virility and lessens thus our sympathy with his tragic end.[1]

Still another statement in the scene is worthy of consideration: "Wen ich lieb/ lass'ich für sich gewähren;/ Helden nur können mir frommen." This, too, produces the impression that Siegfried's achievements will be of use to Wotan, tho he may refer only to the removal of the curse. It may refer back to "dem wonnigsten Wälsung/ weis' ich mein Erbe nun an...."/ concerning which Wagner says: "Das Schöpfungwerk dieses höchsten selbst vernichtenden Willens, ist der endlich gewonnene furchtlose, liebende Mensch, Siegfried."

Does it mean that Wotan intends, then, to renounce his power in favor of Siegfried?—This view is held by Robert.[2] Concerning Siegmund Köstlin[3] says Wotan's aim was "die Erweckung eines Helden, welcher....selbst aus eigenem Trieb dieses Werk unternehmen wird ohne Gefahr oder jedoch jedenfalls ohne so grosze Gefahr für die Götter, wie sie von den Riesen sowol als von Zwergen droht" and[4] "er will....bewirken, dasz....der Herrschaftsring an einen Menchen, welcher den Göttern nicht feind ist, welchem vielmehr Wotan, wenn es nicht anders mehr gehen sollte, die Weltherrschaft abzutreten nicht ungeneigt wäre, da er seines eigenen Stammes und Geschlechtes ist." Köstlin points out that this hero could not be a god because they were all involved in the contract. It would be absurd, however, to think

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[1]Wagner's view (in a letter to Roeckel Jan. 25, 1854): "Dies ist alles, was wir aus der Geschichte der Menschheit zu lernen haben: das Notwendige zu wollen und selbst zu vollbringen," suggests a similar view of Hebbel's (Tgb. II, 2504): "Der Mensch hat freien Willen—d. h. er kann einwilligen in's Nothwendige!" Since, then, Wotan seems "in's Nothwendige nicht einwilligen zu können," the only thing left for him is "die Verneinung des Willens." Wotan, in accord with Wagner's view of tragic exaltation, however, goes a step farther in not only seeming to will his submission but to bring on his doom himself after it has been warded off, a situation that seems very much forced.

[2]Robert, Gustave: *Philosophie et Drame*, Paris, 1907.

[3]Köstlin, Karl: *Richard Wagners Tondrama: Der Ring des Nibelungen* p. 41.

[4]Id. pp. 45-46.

of the rule of the universe as placed in the hands of a mortal. We must surely think of Siegfried as Wotan's heir only in so far as he takes up Wotan's work of returning the gold to the Rhine. Tho Wotan did intend the later encounter with Siegfried, he did not expect the breaking of his spear. We have a feeling of disappointment on his part then—certainly no feeling of exaltation in his submission to his fate.

Alberich's last speech in the scene prepares for his schemes in *Götterdämmerung*: "Doch lacht nur zu,"/ ....So lange das Gold/ im Lichte glänzt,/ hält ein Wissender Wacht:/ trügen wird euch sein Trotz."

Scene II.

The second scene prepares for the later ones in bringing Siegfried and Mime to the place of action and in Mime's vain efforts to produce the sensation of fear in Siegfried's heart. It may perhaps be a question whether Mime really wishes to inspire fear as yet since that would defeat the very purpose for which he had come; on the other hand because of Wotan's prophecy, he does hope to produce it at the same time that Siegfried shall kill the monster. However that may be, whether from his shrewdness or his stupidity, Mime's apparent efforts to inspire fear have the opposite effect.

There is further preparation for the later scenes in Siegfried's feeling which causes him to warn the smith to depart if he values his life. His disgust at Mime becomes insupportable, since the hero has learned his own parentage and made his own sword, while Mime's eagerness for the ring leads the smith to his death.

Scene III.

The third scene is episodical but presents again the tenderer side of Siegfried's nature—his longing for his mother, (together with his joy at separation from Mime) and sympathy with nature, which prepares for his later understanding of the birds. It ends with the blast from his horn which rouses Fafner.

Scene IV.

In scene 4, Siegfried fulfills the curse upon Fafner, his own spirit prompting him to kill the monster that threatens him. The creature warns him of the curse upon the gold and of the intentions of Mime—a warning which, tho the youth seems to pay little heed to it, helps to make that of the birds unnecessary. The transcendental element, in that the forest bird tells him of the treasure is not inharmonious with the promptings of his own curiosity—his instinct to explore. (It recalls also the communion of the innocent Donatello—in Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*—with the creatures about him.) That Siegfried is not influenced by the bird's promise concerning the ring: "der macht ihn zum Walter der Welt " is shown by his words upon securing the booty as also by his later attitude in the scene with the Rhine maids. There, too, it is shown that he was conscious of the dragon's warning but regarded it as part of the attempt to teach him fear. He was committing no wrong and needed not therefore to fear a curse. Thruout the scene he has a mixture of naiveté, that keeps him from the comprehension of the meaning of these things, together with a confidence, a self-sufficiency, that gives him rightfully the feeling of indifference and security.

Scene V.

The fifth scene is merely episodical—a mere wrangling between Alberich and Mime regarding their respective rights to the booty, and an expression of disappointment at finding it in the possession of Siegfried. While Mime has hope for himself, Alberich merely disappears with the words: "Und doch seinem Herrn soll er noch gehören" —without any attempt to gain his desires, another case of arbitrary motivation, it seems to me. There was, however, good reason to suppose that Siegfried would not consider any assertions of ownership on the part of the dwarf, nor could the latter cope with the youth's strength.

Scene VI.

In this scene terror and eagerness lead Mimè, as Dr. Kar-

sten expressed it, to use the language of self-expression instead of that of impression, or communication, as he intended, thus revealing the very plot he wished to conceal and bringing about his speedy death. This foolishness on the part of Mime makes the warning of the birds unnecessary or only symbolical of the lad's own understanding of human nature, a use of symbolism quite in keeping with Hebbel's idea.

The slaying of Mime marks the third tragic ending due to desire for gold, Mime meeting the same fate as Fasolt and Fafner.

The story at this point (as also in Siegfried's obtaining of ring and Tarnhelm) is epic, rather than dramatic in its manner of progress, as the prompting to seek Brünnhilde has no other motivation than the following of the forest bird in quest of another adventure. The use of the symbolical again is not offensive as it is in accord with Siegfried's feeling of loneliness and desire for companionship—some critics call it an undefined desire for love, in which case one should lay the emphasis on "undefined." It does not seem natural that the inexperienced Siegfried should so suddenly have so definite a desire as for a bride and the suggestion from the birds is decidedly epic rather than dramatic. The incident does not grow out of any previous action or plot other than the impulse supposedly caused by Wotan. From this point of view, what follows is a part of the Wotan-drama but it is very loosely connected as far as the course of the human characters is concerned—is of the same type of motivation as that in the case of Siegmund and Sieglinde.

Siegfried's setting out leads, of course, to the next act.

Act III, Scene I.

The conversation between Wotan and Erda is purely episodical. It consists largely of a narrative of past events, due again no doubt to Wagner's reverse order of writing the dramas. It seems absurd, however, that Wotan should summon Erda at all, simply to tell her of his attitude toward his approaching doom.

Reference has been made to his speech:[1] "Urwissend stachest du einst der Sorge Stachel in Wotan's wagendes Herz:" etc. One critic speaks of it as part of the result of his guilt that he should be engaged in a continued vain endeavor to evade a fate that he knows beforehand he cannot escape: "sage mir nun: wie besiegt die Sorge der Gott?" The scene may perhaps lend additional color to his despair but it adds nothing to the action of the drama and for that reason even detracts from the expected concentration of the dramatic form.

I have already discussed (p. 33) Wotan's statement: "Ein kühnster Knabe, meines Rathes bar, errang des Nibelungen Ring." It was thru Wotan, indirectly, that it was possible for Siegfried to have the instrument with which to kill Fafner, tho it is true that the youth's course of action was wholly in keeping with his own instinct. The drama of gods and men is a somewhat complicated matter. In the preceding drama, it seemed an artificial motivation to think of Wotan as giving the human characters impulses and bringing them into conditions to suit his will, while on the other hand here it seems a preposterous state of affairs that the god should stand aside and leave the world to take care of itself—tho the situation is made necessary by Wotan's new attitude and his stipulation for the effective hero. It was a difficult problem and it does not seem to me that Wagner has solved it in any convincing way, from the dramatic standpoint at least. Wotan's relation to Siegfried reminds one of a current conception of free will and divine guidance which tries to assert both, a common Christian idea being that of divine guidance in man's good acts—of course, as here, in accord with man's character—and man's own responsibility for the wrongs he commits.[2]

[1] cf. on *Rheingold*, p. 17.

[2] It is interesting in passing to recall Hebbel's view (Tgb. I, 973): "Nicht seine Wirkungen nach auszen, der Einflusz, den er auf Welt und Leben ausübt, nur seine Wirkungen nach innen, seine Reinigung und Läuterung, hängt von dem Willen des Menschen ab. Er ist die von unsichtbarer Hand geschwungene Axt, die sich selbst schleift. In diesem Sinne könnte man sagen: der Mensch thut sein Schlimmes selbst; sein Gutes wirken Gott und Natur durch ihn. Dies Alles ist so wahr, dasz gerade, was unbewuszt als Wirkung von ihm ausgeht, alles Andere bei weitem übertrifft."

Scene II.

Siegfried's conduct in the second scene is quite in harmony with that of the scenes with Mime. In the earlier scenes his conduct, however, was relieved by his sympathy with nature and feeling for his mother, but his treatment of Wotan reminds us of the common, summary treatment of vagrants—tho it was provoked by Wotan and is in accord with the independence of the youth's heroic spirit, and Siegfried's independence of Wotan is what Wagner is trying to show. Nevertheless, his impudence and use of abusive epithets help to produce a scene of low-comedy that reminds one of the degenerate type of the sixteenth century. It is the more striking since—tho, of course, unconsciously—Siegfried is speaking to the chief of the gods. A scene of this type is, however, found in *Harbarthsjóth* of the *Edda*, tho between two gods, Thor and Odin.

The encounter was prepared for at the end of *Walkuere* and was commented upon above. (cf. pp. 26 & 37.)

The lines: "Mit dem Auge,/ das als and'res mir fehlt,/ erblickst du selber das eine / das mir zum Sehen verblieb" seem to me oracular und highly absurd even from the point of view of a myth, in spite of H. v. Wolzogen's explanation,[1] quoted by Meinck (p. 88): "Wotan erlangt das Wissen nur um die Hingabe der Hälfte seiner Kraft, d.h. durch seine Selbstteilung, worin die Doppelseitigkeit seines Wesens besteht;" etc. Meinck's own explanation is: "dasz Wotan zur Erlangung der höchsten Weisheit, seiner Gemahlin Fricka und endlich des freien Helden Siegfried, der ein verjüngtes Abbild von Wotan's Wesen darstellt, ein Auge dahingegeben, d.h. einen Teil seines Selbst geopfert hat."[2]

[1] *Bayreuther Blätter* 1878, S. 357 Anm.

[2] cf. also Robert (p. 62): "La première faute de Wotan est d'avoir cessé d'être un instinctif, d'avoir voulu posséder la science," etc. Wagner in his letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854, speaks of Wotan's relation to Fricka as the "root of the matter," i. e. the fact that Wotan was susceptible to evil, and says: "The necessity of prolonging beyond the point of change the subjection to the tie that binds them—a tie resulting from an involuntary illusion of love, the duty of maintaining at all costs the relation into which they have entered and so placing themselves in hopeless opposition to the universal law of change and renewal, which governs the world of phenomena—these are the conditions which bring the pair of them to a state of torment and mutual loveless-ness." Wagner does not develop this motivation with any clearness or consistency, however, and Robert's interpretation would make of Wotan only a blind force. Was he not following instinct when he sought reason?

The speech seems to me, however, to have no further value than to give the impression that this wise god knows something beyond the comprehension of mortals. There is perhaps some attempt to rouse sympathy on the part of Siegfried, of course.

Critics have been greatly puzzled about the scene. Köstlin (64) speaks of Wotan's attitude "wie wenn es ihn reute, Siegfried so mächtig werden zu lassen, ihm den Weg zu Brünnhilden versperren will." Wagner himself in his letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854, says of Wotan: "In the presence of his impending destruction, the god has at last become completely human that—contrary to his high resolve—there is once more a stirring of his ancient pride, brought about by his jealousy for Brünnhilde—his vulnerable point, as it has now become. He will, so to speak, not allow himself to be merely thrust aside; he chooses rather to fall before the conquering might of Siegfried. But this part is so little premeditated and intentional, that in a sudden burst of passion the longing for victory overpowers him, a victory, moreover, which he admits could only have made him more miserable."

The speech: "Fürchtest das Feuer du nicht,/ so sperre mein Speer dir den Weg!" etc. precipitates the encounter and the breaking of his spear, by appealing to the youth's feeling of loyalty to his father and consequent instinct of revenge.—The fact that the youth should be able to break the spear, too, has been the subject of much criticism.[1] The encounter explains itself most naturally on the whole if we think of Wotan as having succeeded better than he wished (since Siegfried's heroism excludes respect or sympathy for others) and again as unable to throw off his habit of governing and in his effort to prove Siegfried fearless inciting him to a display of disrespect that he cannot himself tolerate, causing thus the encounter.

Such motivation as: "Verschlossen hält meine Macht die schlafende Maid/ wer sie erweckte,/ wer sie gewänne,/ machtlos macht' er mich ewig!" seems to me again purely capricious mo-

[1] cf. Drews (pp. 91-2).

tivation. Wotan had sunk Brünnhilde into sleep, saying that only he who feared not his spear should waken her but that did not necessarily involve the breaking of the spear, as this fearlessness was sufficiently evinced by Siegfried's display of spirit.

Another incident that seems inexplicable is: "Es [das Vöglien]floh dir zu seinem Heil,/ den Herrn der Raben/ errieth er hier:/ weh ihm, holen sie 's ein!" What other bird is this supposed to be, then, if not one of Wotan's birds? Or are we to look upon this as an attempt to deceive Siegfried, thus putting him more fully upon his own responsibility?

The hero's explanation: "Strahlend offen/ steht mir die Strasze.../ Im Feuer zu finden die Braut," appeals to me as too rapid development to be natural (cf. p. 39). The suggestion by the bird affords motivation but it does not make plausible, from a dramatic point of view. It would have seemed more convincing if the youth had referred to the maid in such a way after finding her; for we do not think of Siegfried as a medieval knight going out in search of a lady but only as a naive youth in quest of adventure and desirous of companionship. It may, as Dr. Wiehr has suggested, be a matter of wonder as to where Siegfried obtained his concept of "bride." He did form the concept of "mate" from the observation of birds and animals and was striving for the concept of "mother." That would hardly explain, however, his idea of a "bride."

Scene III.

In the last scene of *Siegfried* the light myth comes into prominence and we think of Siegfried as bringing the joyousness of the sunlight. The wakening of Brünnhilde is very pretty, tho the scene grows later into one of sensual passion. The young hero seems at first, however, to have forgotten the promise of a bride and, because of the armor, thinks he has found a man.[1]

[1]His recognition of the fact that she is a woman may not be within the limit of his experience but may be thought of as having some connection with his longing for his mother and his perception that this creature, while a human being, is different from those he has seen before

When he has awakened the maid, too, he believes her at first to be his mother for whom he has had such longing—a very charming touch, as also the fact that he now learns fear. Such reflection as in the last thought would be out of keeping with his naiveté were it not for the fact that this idea of his learning fear has been so impressed upon him.

Brünnhilde's greeting of Siegfried as the light is pretty, but her dwelling on it brings the mythical interpretation rather too much into the foreground. It is, however, in accord with her own mythical character and her joy over her renewed life.

Some consideration of Brünnhilde's speeches may be profitable: "noch eh' du geboren/ barg dich mein Schild:/ so lang' lieb' ich dich, Siegfried!"/ and again: "Dich liebt' ich immer:/ denn mir allein/ erdünkte Wotan's Gedanke./ Der Gedanke, den nie/ ich nennen durfte; ..... weil ich nicht ihn dachte/ und nur empfand./ Denn der Gedanke—/ dürftest du's lösen—/ mir war er nur Liebe zu dir."/ To think of Brünnhilde, from the motive of loving pity and a knowledge of Siegfried's worth, as protecting the unborn hero is a beautiful thought, but to speak now of this love as that to a future bridegroom does not seem agreeable or plausible. Rather it lowers the character of Brünnhilde. If we think of her pity then as preparatory to her new feeling now, connecting it with her hope expressed to Wotan, it seems natural enough and pleasing. It does not seem to me, however, that Wagner was just happy in his expression here, in referring us back rather to the scene with Siegmund where we were led to think, as also in her confession to Wotan, that her feeling of love was for Siegmund, tho for the Wälsungen race in general.

The second speech does not seem entirely comprehensible, either. In the first place it would seem that Wotan's thought became clear to her before it was clear to Wotan himself (cf. *Walkuere* III.) as far as the means to his purpose was concerned. Only in so far as this motive for her protection and strife referred to the Wälsungen race in general, thus including Siegfried, to be sure,

can her attitude seem plausible. That she should at that time, semi-divine tho she was, have felt love for him as now seems preposterous and incomprehensible.

That Brünnhilde should resist Siegfried's love as completing her isolation from and punishment by the god seems convincing and awakens our sympathy.—It reminds one of the same situation in Hebbel, but her struggle here while more pleasing is less tragic. —Knowing, however, that it is her fate to yield, she does so gradually but entirely, attracted by the vehemence and beauty in Siegfried's personality. Her new feeling then becomes so intense that it prepares us here for her attitude in the scene with Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*. For her wider world view vanishes: "Trauriges Dunkel/ trübt mir den Blick," etc. and her interest becomes limited and so centered in Siegfried that she becomes indifferent to the weal of the gods, as to her own fate: "Lachend muss ich dich lieben;/ lachend will ich erblinden;/ lachend lass' uns verderben" etc. The motivation here is by no means clear. One would be inclined to take the passage simply to mean that the heavens might fall for all she cared, for she was happy in her love. It seems, however, to imply that the fall of the gods is connected with her yielding to love, an interpretation that seems unwarranted as far as any motivation is concerned. (Or does she refer to the breaking of the sword?) There is no reason to suppose that her surrender of the ring would have been more effective before the death of Siegfried than it proved later. Or are we to think that the prevention of Siegfried's death by her surrender of the ring would have made possible a new and better era? There is no development that shows that to be the case—there is certainly again a lack of clearness in motivation.

Goetterdaemmerung

Vorspiel. Scene I.

Wagner has been criticised for the introduction of the Norn scene, a scene based in part upon the *Edda*. The style is certainly undramatic from the modern point of view; for the Norns do not further the action, nor do they, indeed, make it much clearer. Tho more mystic than the Greek chorus, and not philosophic, they perform in a way the function of the chorus. They give us the impression of the absolute certainty of Wotan's fall, relating again past events (some of them only hinted before) and suggesting those to come. The scene is, however, more strictly a recounting of the events of the drama than is true of the Greek chorus (which rather comments upon than recounts the events of the drama) and is more in the epic manner.

We have another mention of Wotan's sacrifice of an eye at the well of wisdom [1] and the Norn tells of the making of the spear from the Welt-Esche, a tree supposed to sustain the world. [2] Wagner, then, has changed the myth by having the spear made from the ash and connecting with this incident the downfall of the world.—In the *Edda*, it is true, some connection is suggested between the fall of the tree and Nibelheim: "die dritte (Wurzel) steht über Nifflheim, und diese Wurzel ist Hwergelmir und Nidhöggr nagt von unten auf an ihr." [3] In Wagner, however, this connection is not brought out, tho the tree falls thru Wotan, and Wotan's fall is supposed to be precipitated by the robbery of Alberich, and suggestion is made of Alberich's previous distrust. [4] In *Rheingold* Wotan's guilt began earlier than his robbery of the dwarf; that is, with the pawning of Freia. Now Wagner breaks the unity of action further by connecting his guilt,

[1] cf above, pp. 41-42.

[2] cf. Simrock's translation of the *Edda*, p. 258. There we are told: "n langer Zeiten Lauf | zehrte die Wunde den Wald;" etc.

[3] Simrock's translation, p. 258.

[4] *Rheingold*, Sc. 3.

or at least the ultimate cause of his fall, with the attainment of his power—we were told before that his doom was due to the breaking of contract, tho it really went back of that to the sacrifice of the Goddess of Love for power. The thought of the two incidents is similar but has, nevertheless, this difference: that the later incident represents an unfair acquision of power while nothing of the sort is implied in the earlier (unless we think of wantonness in his doing violence to the ash. Then the question suggests itself, "What kind of gods were these before without any power? Does an age of innocence imply that there was no need of guidance?" On the contrary the runes on the spear are spoken of as "Treu berath'ner/ Verträge Runen." The making of the spear, then, which insured Wotan's power, made his downfall inevitable and its cause previous to any specified guilt. (We have no reason to believe that the wound would not have killed the tree even if he had been true to contract.)

The withering of the ash makes questionable the value of all the struggle of the dramas; for, since it is the "all-nourishing," its fall implies not only that of the gods but of the whole world, tho we do not know how long a time might elapse before that event. Such is the case in the *Edda,* altho the new world is to arise and Baldur to return. In the case of the end of the world (and it is suggested in Brünnhilde's speech, "Enden sah ich die Welt,") Brünnhilde's sacrifice and the return of the ring to the Rhine would seem to be rendered useless. If, however, we understand the destruction of only the gods, as implied in the earlier speech: "Verging wie Hauch/ der Götter Geschlecht,/ lass' ohne Walter/ die Welt ich zurück,"/ then the return of the gold would have a value as far as Wotan's conscience is concerned in stopping the progress of the wrong tho it cannot repair all the wrong that was done. [1] The world has a more hopeful outlook, perhaps, with the death of each one—except Alberich—who has craved the gold.[2]

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[1] cf. above p. 21.
[2] cf. below p. 67.

The comprehension, then, of Wotan's fall depends upon the epic prolog, rather than upon the development of the action of the drama—an account of an incident before the drama began. We may look upon his connection with Loge and subsequent predicaments as only a means, perhaps, of hastening the catastrophe, his own will then hastening it still more by the cutting down of the ash and the preparation of the pyre. (The time of Wotan's connection with Loge is subsequent to the making of the spear.)

The connection between the curse and the end of the world: "Aus Neid und Noth/ ragt mir des Nibelungen Ring:" etc./ has been discussed above (pp. 14, 17, 46). Köstlin (pp. 55/6 justly objects that the fall of the gods should not depend upon a little ring; that is, that the ring story should be apart of that of the fall of the gods instead of the reverse order of affairs. He questions the sufficiency of the guilt of the gods, having in mind the robbery of the dwarf, to which he adds Wotan's subsequent course; e.g. the manipulation of Siegmund and Sieglinde to afford sufficient justification for the gods' doom. In part I agree with him but think he has failed to notice the previous guilt in the forfeiture of the Goddess of Love and Youth. With Golther (p. 34) I should grant to the story a certain unity of thought—with lapses [1]—in that Wotan's career and downfall are in harmony with his selfish desire for power and disregard of the spirit of love. I should not, as Köstlin, characterize it merely as lack of proportion in the two stories but rather an incongruity with facts, since Wotan's fall does not really depend upon the curse. The emphasis is placed there, however, by the reiterated statement of such a fact and, as pointed out (p. 22) the reader does receive such an impression.

Scene II.

The epic element is again predominant when Brünnhilde sends Siegfried out merely to seek new deeds. Some excuse is found perhaps in the fact that this is a prolog rather than a part

[1] cf. p. 17.

of the drama proper, but nevertheless, it is to be presented on the stage in close connection with the rest. We find here essentially a beginning rather than a motivation of events.

Another step in the ring tragedy is made, however, in Siegfried's presentation to Brünnhilde of the fateful ring. There is also a hinted motivation for Siegfried's later misfortunes in his inability to benefit by her advice: "nicht zürne, wenn dein Lehren/ mich unbelehret liesz!"/ This was characteristic of him in *Siegfried* in his attitude toward learning fear, tho there his aversion to Mime must have aided his resistance, conscious or unconscious, to the feeling. Here, if we may judge by the older accounts as regards the amount Brünnhilde tried to impart, it is no wonder that Siegfried felt burdened. Wagner showed good judgment in omitting the runes, as the incident is essentially undramatic and unappealing.

Act I, Scene I.

The motives for the following action lie in the characters of Gunther and Hagen—in Gunther's vanity or desire for fame, which Hagen is not slow to make use of and has no doubt been in the habit of cultivating : "deinem Rath nur red' ich Lob,/ frag ich dich nach meinem Ruhm."/ Hagen's purpose is, of course, revealed later. His knowledge of the outside world is traditional tho here we may suppose him to have obtained it from his father.

The plan to win Siegfried, and thru him Brünnhilde, is, naturally, pure intrigue and redounds little to the credit of Gutrune, as well as of Gunther and Hagen.

The arrival of Siegfried is motivated to a certain extent in his desire to perform deeds and his apparent knowledge of Gunther's strength. To Hagen's question as to where he is going, he replies: "Zu Gibich's starkem Sohne."/ Hebbel because of his different plan is able to offer a more definite motivation in Siegfried's knowledge of Kriemhild's beauty and his desire to win her.

Scene II.

The second scene brings the entrance of Siegfried, demanding combat or friendship. The former request seems more in keeping with his character as we have seen it, tho he is supposed to be a peaceful, or at any rate good-natured, hero, and in the preceding drama was desirous of friendship. Their exchange of oaths seems, nevertheless, precipitate, tho we understand Gunther's motive and are familiar with Siegfried's impetuosity: "Des Schatzes vergasz ich fast :/ so schätz' ich sein müsz' ges Gut!", may illustrate his impetuosity, tho the second line seems to me rather forced. The fact of his passing such a judgment hardly implies naiveté, tho it shows his independence and his freedom from the influence of the common opinion. Siegfried's knowledge of the form of the oath, etc. implies some lapse of time and some experience since his parting from Brünnhilde, too.

The use of the potion here, to me, as to many critics, [1] seems an artificial and inconsistent motivation, and *is* so from a psychological standpoint, since the result is in immediate and direct contrast to the feeling Siegfried has just expressed and to his pledge of fidelity to Brünnhilde. Wagner introduced purely magic interference without any consideration of harmony with character, thinking by that means to save the nobility of Siegfried's character, but he does not succeed in making the scene or Siegfried's character in this respect convincing. The effect of the potion is, of course, not in harmony with our conception of his character, nor does time elapse to account for any change. The incongruity is, moreover, made more pronounced by the later potion. Or are we to think of Siegfried as a conceited fickle fellow who can at any time change his mind and become faithless without mental pain or struggle? Wagner, of course, does not intend us to think so. Or may we say that in his inexperience or naiveté he unconsciously follows the impulse of the moment, unthinking as far as wrong to others is con-

[1] cf. Drews (p. 100).

cerned? The return of his feeling thru the second potion makes this, too, improbable. Wagner does not trouble himself to make the action grow out of the characters but contents himself with miracles.

Menick (p. 268) supports Moritz Wirth[1] in speaking of Siegfried's death as due to his failure to recall Brünnhilde's rune for the protection against magic. All that is a sufficient explanation for a fairy story of epic style but does not seem to me a convincing motivation for a drama. As far as this circumstance is concerned at least, Siegfried's death is due to his misfortune rather than his fault, and is sad but not tragic.—Brünnhilde says in *Siegfrieds Tod*: "was du mir nahmst, nützest du nicht,/ deinem muthigen Trotz vertrautest du nur."/ in the final rendering we have no attitude of disrespect for her knowledge, but it would be more natural for Siegfried to depend upon his strength and courage, rather than to try to learn a long list of rules for his protection. In mythology and in Fouqué we find rules against magic also, advice concerning fidelity to friends and oaths and association with women, etc. ad infinitum. The rune against magic is, of course, the one needed as all his misconduct is dependent upon that rather than upon himself,—and that motivation we have just discussed.

His desire to win Gutrune at once, as soon as he is conscious of his new feeling, is in accord with his impetuosity, but the form that it takes—exactly in keeping with Gunther's wishes—would seem deliberate on the part of the author, were it not for the fact that we may regard Siegfried as so filled with this desire himself that it is the most natural question: "Hast du, Gunther, ein Weib?"/ The question, of course, leads at once to Gunther's disclosure of his desire and Siegfried's offer of assistance.

Köstlin (p. 58) justifies Siegfried's death on the plea, "Einmal ist Siefried von Schuld nicht frei, verübte Gewaltthat und List gegen Brünnhilde, als er sie durch den Tarnhelm

[1] *Musicalisches Wochenblatt* 1885, Nr. 17-23.

für Gunther zu gewinnen unternahm," as also from the fact that it is common in life that people die as victims of deceit. The latter statement is true enough (and sad tho not tragic) but the former needs a little further consideration. It is true that he did exercise violence and the affair is not in accordance with modern ideas. It is true that in both Wagner and Hebbel Siegfried in this affair had blunt sensibilities as far as Brünnhilde was concerned, but it is also true that in both cases the youth had no feeling of guilt in the matter (in Wagner we may suppose him in his simplicity to have no criterion of right and wrong in the matter,) and his motive was commendable—that of service to one to whom he had made the vow of friendship, at a period, too, when we may suppose such service from friend to friend to have occupied a more important part in life than now. In both the hero has held an attitude of honor toward her as far as his own consciousness is concerned—in Hebbel from the fact that he does not greet where he cannot woo and in Wagner in his use of his sword to preserve his faith to Gunther. In Hebbel Siegfried has more contempt for Brünnhilde's personality tho he does not appeal to this as a reason for his willingness to perform the deed. The deed, the employment of strength, is in both cases a matter of course. There is, however, a decided difference in the motivation in the two poets. In Wagner this episode is the pretext for Hagen's act and that in part is true in Hebbel—to a certain extent he is a victim in both cases. In the latter, however, his first act which was voluntary—not motivated by magic—leads inevitably to his second. There he does have a certain feeling of guilt, some consideration for Brünnhilde as well as for Kriemhilde, but now is forced by a tragic necessity to perform in his second contest a deed that leads to his own destruction—a tool again perhaps but not without his own mental struggle.

The fact that Hagen refrains from the oath leaves him free to perform his wicked deed from motives ostensibly good—to the

mind of Gunther and Brünnhilde—without breaking a faith sacred to the Germanic mind.

At the close of the scene we find Gutrune rejoicing in the prospect of winning Siegfried, unashamed of the means, and Hagen glorying in the success of his schemes and in the hope of the ring and of consequent power.

Scene III.

Waltraute's account to Brünnhilde presents once more the situation of Wotan (his career is presented in the epic manner thruout this drama, tho here a natural opportunity is offered for the account). Wotan is solemnly awaiting, or even hastening, the end, smiling only once—presumably when Siegfried wakened Brünnhilde—indifferent to all supplication, filling all with fear. Again, however, a glimmer of hope comes to him as he whispers to Waltraute: "des tiefen Rheines Töchtern/ gäbe den Ring sie zurück,/ von des Fluches Last/ erlöst wär', Gott und Welt."/ What then does Wotan mean? Is he still trying to escape his fate, or does he mean that a peaceful end would then be possible? Concerning the effectiveness of release from the curse, comment has been made above[1].

The demand made upon Brünnhilde is to her, however, impossible of fulfillment. She cannot see the value or justice of it. She seems no longer to have comprehension of the impending fall of the gods. In fright she asks: "Was ist's denn mit den ewigen Göttern?"/ Whatever the situation, however, she cannot rise to the sacrifice of her love and selfishly refuses to consider others, to perform the mission assigned her—not out of greed for gold, nor for any power it might bring, but for the personal happiness, including nevertheless, a feeling of loyalty to Siegfried. In being true to her love, then, she sins against the broader conception of love,[1] and we find the individual in clash with the general weal. It is similar to the case of Johanna where a laudable

[1]cf. p. 45 and pp. 20-21.
[1]cf. also Drews (p. 84, Anm.).

personal feeling is regarded as wrong in conflict with a mission —with this difference: that Brünnhilde has not accepted the mission, tho she is in a measure conscious of it. She defends her position by placing the blame on others (and it belongs there), regarding the demand as the taking away of something rightfully belonging to her.

What she does not perform of her own free will, however, she performs later from force of circumstances, or rather she gives up ring and life when they no longer have any charm for her. But is that any credit to her, is that self-sacrificing or redeeming love? has been asked[1].

The latter part of the scene presents the carrying out of Siegfried's promise to Gunther in the conquest of Brünnhilde, and the transfer of the ring to Siegfried again. Are we to regard this as the fulfilment of the curse upon Brünnhilde? True, she has desired the ring, but plan was made for her conquest before her refusal to give it up—tho not before she has desired it. The surrender of the ring would probably not have prevented the conquest tho it might have prevented the catastrophe to the human characters. The scheme was concocted before Hagen knew that Brünnhilde had the ring but was, of course, a pretext for Siegfried's death thru which he hoped to secure the ring. She would, then, probably have been overcome without ever having had the ring. That she did have it, however, and thereby learned from Waltraute Wotan's need forms motivation for her final return of the ring to the Rhine maids.

Brünnhilde's view of the matter: "Wotan, ergrimmter,/ grausamer Gott!/ Weh'! Nun erseh' ich/ der Strafe Sinn:/ zu Hohn und Jammer/ jag'st du mich hin!"/ would not be consistent with Wotan's attitude of inactivity.

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[1]Wagner in his letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854, in speaking of Brünnhilde's loyalty to her love does not think of it as selfish (consciously or unconsciously) in any degree, but this is the love thru which, together with Siegfried, she becomes the redeemer of the world! His own interpretation is a lower ideal of love, and his ideal here seems in conflict with his gospel of renunciation (inserted, of course, later).

Siegfried gives evidence of his intended good faith in his speech: "Nun, Nothung, zeuge du,/ das ich in Züchten warb, etc."/

The use of the magic Tarnhelm does not make the deed seem improbable, for we are even told that it concealed most of the hero's face, or rather that the hero feared it had not entirely concealed his face.

The fact that the fire still surrounded the rock has been objected to as untrue to mythology. The same case is found, however, in the *Völsungasaga* and may be thought of as symbolical of the protection of Brünnhilde's maidenhood—as well as a part of the nature myth.

Act II. Scene I.

In the first scene of the second act the conversation between Alberich and Hagen makes clear Hagen's superior knowledge, his true feeling toward the Gibichungen and desire for the ring. Wagner has chosen to represent Hagen as in sleep, from the old superstition that the elf comes to one asleep causing nightmare[1]. Alberich relates Wotan's absurd defeat by a mortal and consequent helplessness. He relates, too, Siegfried's conquests and says: "jede Gewalt/ hat er gewonnen;/ Walhall und Nibelheim/ neigen sich ihm—"/ a fact that is true to this extent, that he has a possession they are seeking.

Alberich's assertion: "an dem furchtlosen Helden/ erlahmt selbst mein Fluch:/ denn nicht weisz er des Ringes Werth," etc./ seems consistent with the facts of the case as they should be but not as they are represented in Siegfried's conversation with the Rhine maids. Siegfried relates there the prophecy concerning the ring, but still does not value it and should remain free from the curse. As regards the result of his knowledge of the baneful effect of the ring discussion will be offered later.

We receive further hint as to Hagen's plan "Zu seinem Verderben/ dient er mir schon,"/ as also concerning Alberich's

[1]cf. Meinck, pp. 311-312.

machinations. He has managed to have in the midst of the enemy in the guise of a friend an instrument, a son of brave lineage thru his mother and shrewdness thru his father—a son into whom he has instilled a desire to accomplish his (Alberich's) purpose, so that Hagen in turn uses those about him to come into contact, thru them, with Siegfried. We may imagine that he would have accomplished this, even if the hero had not of his own accord arrived on the scene. If, then, we regard the suggestion that Alberich should not remain helpless if he could have a son as a prophecy of events, it may be accepted. To accept, however, the mere fact of the dwarf's having a son as a proper motivation would still seem forced. In addition was needed the right environment to make that fact of value.

Scene II.

The second scene is for the most part episodical, tho it gives the author a chance to relate naturally the manner of transfer of Brünnhilde from Siegfried to Gunther. Gutrune has some natural scruples about Siegfried's part in the conquest, but her suspicions are allayed by his explanations and, as in the other accounts, her admiration for his prowess is enhanced.

Preparations are ordered for the reception of the bridal pair, Gutrune's attitude suggesting that of Hebbel's Kriemhild. Gutrune says: "Laszt sie uns hold empfah'n, dasz heiter und genu sie weile!" In Hebbel we have a more vivid impression in a charming scene representing the welcome.

Scene III.

Hagen's summons of Gunther's men provides witnesses for the following scene and increases the necessity for revenge and the restoration of Gunther's honor. Nevertheless the manner of the summons and the effect upon the men seem incongruous in view of the occasion, as does also his characterization of Brunnhilde as "freisliches Weib" (unless recalling her career as Valkyria). His manner, however, has consistency with his faithless char-

acter. His seeming joke changes to quite the opposite in the following scene. Already he suggests the expected turn of affairs: "Hold seid der Herrin, helfet ihr treu, traf sie ein Leid, rasch seid zur Rache." His revelation of Siegfried's having lent assistance makes his only plea that of disloyalty and places Siegfried entirely in the position of a wronged man (cf. pp. 51-52).

Scene IV.

The catastrophe is greatly hastened by Brünnhilde's immediate discovery of the ring on Siegfried's finger and her consequent accusation. That he had not removed the ring from sight is not surprising, in view of the rapid course of events and his absorbing interest in his own love, tho this absorption is merely suggested in his swift return and immediate inquiry for Gutrune. Why Siegfried is not puzzled at receiving his own ring from Brünnhilde becomes a query. He should be conscious of two facts: that he has a ring which he took from her and that the ring he has is one which he won with the Tarnhelm. Why he never expresses any consciousness of the mystery is our riddle. There is, of course, little time given for reflection and he might naturally refrain from expression of surprise in Brünnhilde's presence, but he seems later on, too, to take the ring as a matter of course. The potion does not seem quite to settle the difficulty since it was supposed to make him forget merely his earlier relation with Brünnhilde.

If we accept, however, a second lapse of memory as well as a first, we find a highly dramatic scene filled with contrasts—or intended contradictions. The courses of two people are made to cross each other and bring about the annihilation of both—both characters in the right as in Hebbel but with this difference, that here the conflict does not grow out of their characters—is not inevitable, but is arranged by the author as deus ex machina. It is true that in life a wicked intriguer may force each of two innocent people thru mutual misunderstanding to destroy the happiness of the other, but we then expect mental suffering on the

part of both. The conflict cannot but seem here unnatural and forced from its very superabundance of contradictions.

Brünnhilde has ample evidence of Siegfried's guilt in her remembrance of their former relation and in Gunther's confusion when she asks: "Wo bärgest du den Ring,/ den du von mir erbeutest,/" Siegfried, however, conscious of his sincere intent admits his part in the contest, pleading innocence, however, of perfidy. Hagen's mention of Siegfried's part in the contest above was not in any way to Siegfried's discredit—a variation from Raupach, with whom Hebbel in a measure agrees, where the whole matter comes as a vivid shock to the public within the drama. In each case the charge hinges upon his loyalty to Brünnhilde and toward Gunther. Here he has only an unconscious guilt, in Hebbel a guilt forced upon him by circumstances but one that he cannot entirely shake off, and in Raupach a guilt that we will all admit from his low ideal of morality, a guilt that does not, however, make the story more palatable.

Here Siegfried exclaims: "Nothung, mein werthes Schwert,/ wahrte der Treue Eid;/ mich trennte seine Schärfe/ von diesem traurigen Weib."/ while Brünnhilde, having in mind his earlier visit, makes reply: "Wohl kenn' ich auch die Scheide,/ darin so wonnig/ ruht' an der Wand/ Nothung, der treue Freund,/ als die Traute sein Herr sich gefreit."/ The hero is put on the defensive here before Gutrune a second time—in Raupach and Hebbel only before the quarrel: "Treulos, Siegfried,/ sännest du Trug?/ Bezeuge, dasz falsch/ jene dich zeiht!"/

The scene results in an oath, as in Raupach and Hebbel, and in Siegfried's relation to Hagen we have a touch of tragic irony that reminds one slightly of the situation in Hebbel. Here Siegfried says, taking oath on Hagen's spear: "wo der Tod mich trifft, treffe du mich;/ klagte das Weib doch wahr," etc./ and it is all only too terribly brought to pass. In Hebbel the tragic irony is yet more striking in that Hagen skilfully leads Siegfried to

characterize himself unconsciously as a villain deserving of the death that soon comes to him.

In Wagner, as in Hebbel, the first suggestion of Siegfried's death comes from Hagen, tho in the latter Brünnhilde assumes that outcome as absolutely a matter of course. In Wagner she is dimly conscious that the hero does not recognize her: "Siegfried .....kennt mich nicht?"/ and her desire for revenge is mingled with something of pathos, since she regards the situation as part of her punishment inflicted by the gods: "Heilige Götter!/ Lehrt ihr mich Leiden/ wie keiner sie litt?"/ Her feeling of the inexplicability of the situation—a feeling that there was something needing explanation—is not unnatural from her earlier acquaintance with Siegfried and in view of her relation to the gods. That she should reflect upon this and still resolve upon his death seems less natural, but it is made reasonable by Hagen's interpretation of the case.

Siegfried has not here the understanding of human nature that served him in his relation to Mime, but there doubtless he had learned to judge thru his years of association with the smith. He says now: "Gönnt ihr Weil' und Ruh,'/ der wilden Felsen-Frau,/ dasz die freche Wuth sich erlege..../ Doch Frauengroll/ friedet sich bald."/ His judgment is, of course, clouded, too, by his forgetfulness of past events. His characterization of the scene as "Weiber-Gekeif" recalls Fouqué and Raupach and suggests Hebbel.

That he still does not recall any compunctions of conscience concerning the deceit is shown in his speech to Gunther: "Glaub', mehr zürnt's mich als dich,/ dasz schlecht ich sie getäuscht."/

Scene V.

In Brünnhilde's attitude toward the proposed death of Siegfried we do not have such a feeling of absolute necessity as in Hebbel. As suggested above, she feels conscious of some external force. She feels, however, helpless in her effort to solve the problem, and not having any way to establish Siegfried's in-

nocence she is obliged to believe his shameless deceit and to demand revenge.

That the fact that Brünnhilde has imparted her knowledge to Siegfried should deprive her of her wisdom might at first seem purely mythical motivation (and it has mythical basis) but it seems reasonable that new interests should make old ones grow dim.

She expresses an idea similar to that expressed by Hagen in Hebbel, but with a somewhat different turn: "in seiner Macht hält er die Magd:/ in seinen Banden/ faszt er die Beute, die, jammernd ob ihrer Schmach,/ jauchzend der Reiche verschenkt!"/ (In the *Entwurf* and in *Siegfrieds Tod* she says: "Du übermüthiger Held,/ wie hieltest du mich gebannt!" She refers, however, to her helplessness in taking revenge, while Hagen refers rather to Siegfried's irresistible attraction for her, a feeling that had to be satisfied by the hero's death since her love was spurned. The idea that she has been transferred as a chattel is present here too as in Hebbel where she regards herself as the despised "Pfennig."

Her admiration for Siegfried remains in spite of her bitterness and causes her to be contemptuous of Hagen's plan. Brünnhilde's speech: "Nicht eine Kunst/ war mir bekannt,/ die zum Heil nicht half seinem Leib."/ etc. is another use of magic motive, not out of harmony with the hero's own spirit, however. We feel that it is not necessary, but is made acceptable by the fact that Brünnhilde was Wotan's warrior maid, and also by its incompleteness: "Niemals—das wuszt' ich—/ wich er dem Feind,/ nie reicht' er ihm fliehend den Rücken:/ an ihm d'rum spart' ich den Segen."/ This solution makes the hero more attractive to me than that of Hebbel, but the latter was more suitable for Hebbel's purpose and gave opportunity to make a more plausible hero of Hagen, while here the latter is a miserable intriguer. In Hebbel, too, Siegfried's invulnerability was in accord with his character.

The character of Gunther is, it is true, weak in all accounts but here his morality suffers more than elsewhere. In Fouqué, and in Raupach in the earlier scenes he is by no means attractive, and in the former quite unattractive since he becomes eager for Siegfried's death, but it is after a long and hopeless struggle to pacify Brünnhilde. In Hebbel, as in Raupach, he protests vigorously against the sacrifice of his friend and feels his own humiliating part. In Hebbel he never really consents tho he feels compelled by circumstances and does not hinder. In Wagner he is not the champion of his benefactor, but while he recognizes his own guilt, regards himself as the victim of deceit, accepting the assertion of Hagen and Brünnhilde rather than believing Siegfried's oath. In rhetorical phrases he even appeals to Hagen for aid: "Betrüger ich—und betrogen!/ Verräther ich—und verrathen!/ Zermalmt mir das Mark,/ zerbrecht mir die Brust/ Hilf, Hagen! Hilf meiner Ehr!"/ In Fouqué, too, he was distrustful of Siegfried at the home of the conquest, but unsuccessful himself he entered into the arrangement with Siegfried only under protest, at his mother's instigation, and feels the strange effect of the magic exchange of form.

In Wagner Gunther shudders at the breaking of the oath. (In Fouqué too he on that account, as in the Northern mythology, finds a substitute.) It is chiefly the oath which troubles him here, moreover, and when Hagen plays upon his desire for gain—a desire that the latter has already suggested to him in the first scene—he yields without much protest. Wagner, of course, illustrates again the central thought of the drama by bringing Gunther under the curse, but lowers his character. In the *Nibelungen Lied* Hagen suggests to him that he could have more power if Siegfried were out of the way, but we do not look upon that as an important influence.

In all renderings of the story the wonder is that so weak a character should enjoy so much fame, but in Fouqué, Raupach and Hebbel we have more idea of his own love of conquest and

hear more of his prowess in contest with others of mere mortal strength. His fame was doubtless augmented, too, by his position of power and by the support of Hagen. In Wagner he acknowledged his indebtedness to Hagen in the opening scene, and we find the same situation, due to a nobler motive, in Raupach and Hebbel, on Hagen's part.

The deception of Gutrune furnishes the pretext for the hunt.

Act III, Scene I.

Shortly before his death Siegfried is given a chance to return the ring to the Rhine and thus remove Hagen's motive for killing him—tho not Brünnhilde's unless Hagen should arrange the difficulties. Now he is represented as subjected to the curse, from which Alberich told us he was free. He did remember and quotes now the promise concerning the ring, but it did not allure him. He does not covet the ring for itself or what it will bring—was even about to give it up until he was threatened. He was conscious before of the curse upon the gold—tho not especially upon the ring—but had no reason to fear it since he had not deserved it, and he has not yet, as far as he knows (and is there unconscious guilt?). It does not alter the situation, as far as his deserts are concerned or his occasion for fear, that he is told more specifically that the one who made the ring and lost it had cursed it: "zu zeugen den Tod/ dem, der ihn trüg'."/ There is nothing said here of a wrong done to the Rhine maids and his opportunity and consequent duty of restoring it to its rightful owners. The remark is made that it was of Rhine gold but nothing is said about the vow thru which it was taken. The only wrong implied is one to the maker of the ring, and one who did not understand the whole story would naturally suppose that to him restitution should be made. Only an artificial and enigmatic motivation is given: "Nur seine Fluth/ sühnet den Fluch."/ How should Siegfried know that this is not merely a scheme to obtain the ring? That Fafner's speech has not caused him to pay attention to this warning is explained below (pp. 63-54). I can see

no reason why Siegfried should not have the same feeling of security as formerly.

Meinck (p. 63) says the maids did not at first receive the ring, "weil nur ein *Wissender* den Ring vom Fluche befreien kann." This success in freeing from the curse has been discussed[1]. But he must be a knower of what? is a pertinent question. Is not a consciousness of guilty possession necessary, in order that such a curse may really be a curse—or prove efficacious? That he has no reason to feel. He obtained the ring fairly (he seems to have in mind only the first time he won the ring), does not know of the robbery and can justly cast aside threats even indignantly. There is, however, an element in his character that seems to suggest love of power—or rather of independence—not because of any ring but because of his own merit. He goes farther than the mere defiance of the maids and a superstition which they are trying to impose. Siegfried says in *Siegfrieds Tod*: "Eurem Fluche fliehe ich nicht,/ noch weich' ich der Nornen Gewebe!/ Wozu mein Muth mich mahnt,/ das ist mir Urgesetz,—/ und was mein Sinn mir ersieht,/ das ist mir so bestimmt," in reply to the mermaid's warning: "Ihn (den Fluch) flochten webende Nornen/ in des Urgesetzes Seil." That warning is omitted in the last rendering in this connection, however, tho it would, or should, have come nearer to giving him some feeling of responsibility. The attitude is preserved, however, since he seems in some way to have become conscious of the spear which he shattered and is willing to pit himself against fate (but does not even that rest upon a consciousness, in reference to the curse at least, of an innocence that justifies him?): "Mein Schwert zerschwang einen Speer:/ des Urgesetzes/ ewiges Seil,/ flochten sie wilde/ Flüche hinein,/ Nothung zerhaut es den Nornen!"/ Again, in speaking of Fafner's warning against the curse, Siegfried seems to consider the world in conspiracy to teach him fear and says: "doch das Fürchten lehrt er mich nicht."/ His attitude toward Fafner

[1]cf. p. 21.

and fear in general is consistent thruout. The fact that the first suggestion came from Mime, of whom he had a profound distrust, was sufficient to impress upon his mind the importance of resistance to any such feeling—his resistance was of course innate anyway. I can see no guilt, or reason for his being subjected to the curse, other than a courage that tends perhaps toward presumption.

Life that was saved thru fear would be, moreover, contemptible, intolerable to him. In *Siegfrieds Tod* he says: "Nun sollt' ich selbst mich entmannen,/ mit dem Ring verthun meinen Muth"/ and in the last rendering: "Denn Leben und Leib/ sollt' ohne Lieb/ in der Furcht Bande/ bang ich sie fesseln—/ Leben und Leib—/ seht! so/ werf' ich sie weit von mir!"/

The connection of the second line is by no means clear. It seems to fall out of a clear sky. Siegfried has not given evidence of any high conception of love. Indeed, his attitude toward the Rhine maids has lowered our opinion of his conception. Wagner, of course,[1] regarded the union of man and woman thru love as forming the perfect human being, in that each is a complement to the other, and making possible, thus, the redemption. But he certainly does not present his idea in any convincing light.

If, however, one accepts the Rhine maids' warning as sufficiently clear, then Siegfried may perhaps, as Brünnhilde, be regarded as declining a mission that it was his duty to perform. Meinck (p. 62) takes a view similar to this: "Allein der Fluch hat an ihm nur so lange keine Macht, als der Held von der unheilvollen Bedeutung des Ringes noch keine Kenntnis hat. Sobald er aber diese Bedeutung des Ringes weisz und ihn trotzdem nicht fortgiebt, macht er sich dadurch derselben Schuld teilhaftig wie früher seine Braut Brünnhilde." I should not lay the stress on the "unheilvolle Bedeutung" as far as he himself was concerned, however, for the ring has proved powerless to rouse in him any passion of

[1]Letter to Roeckel, Jan. 25, 1854.

covetousness and that would then be an external motivation. His case is not similar to that of Brünnhilde, since she was conscious of the necessity of the gods. Siegfried interprets the maids' warning as referring to himself, not to mankind that he is to save. It appeals to him therefore not as a mission but as a threat to yield to which would be a disgrace to his bravery, and to defy which would prove his courage. Wagner in his *Entwurf* says concerning this point: "Er hat schuldlos die Schuld der Götter übernommen, ihr Unrecht büszt er an sich durch seinen Trotz, seine Selbstständigkeit." But how can one expiate a thing of which one is not guilty, and if it is truly expiation must one not be conscious of it as such? Siegfried has been compared to Christ, but the latter felt burdened with a mission for others.

The further accusations of the mermaids Siegfried naturally cannot understand, and as the maids approached him in a somewhat piquant manner as if trying to inveigle him into granting their wish, he thinks them not worth heeding.

The end of his speech: "trüg' ich nicht Gutrun' Treu',/ der zieren Frauen eine/ hätt' ich mir frisch gezähmt!"/ impresses one as being rather common, and lends a little color to a strain of fickleness in his disposition.

Scene II.

The second potion[1] administered by Hagen furnished to the spectators within the play some justification as avenging a perjury confessed, and to a certain extent responds to a feeling on the part of the reader that Siegfried should not die in a false relation. Yet this second potion from a dramatic point of view makes Siegfried's character improbable as it has no psychological consistency. Again his conduct is directly contradictory to his feeling shortly before.

Scene III.

The third scene represents Gutrune's anxiety about Siegfried's failure to return and her fear of Brünnhilde, then the re-

[1]cf. Drews (p. 105.)

turn of the hunting party and Hagen's cruel announcement, Gutrune's reproach of Gunther, the latter's reproach of Hagen, with Hagen's confession. His only justification is: "Meinem Speer war er gespart,/ bei dem er Meineid sprach,"/ a pretext which he uses also to gain possession of the ring, killing Gunther who tries to prevent it. Siegfried's uplifted arm then solves the plot in an artificial way, preventing Hagen from securing the ring. That such incidents are well known in folk lore does not make this convincing. On the other hand how is this interference to be regarded?—Other than from Wotan? And in that case why is he more justified now than before in interfering?[1] Why could he not have avoided all this sacrifice of others and returned the ring earlier as well as now? Two contradictions of earlier motivation are added, then, in that Wotan ceases to be inactive and Alberich's son proves useless after all.

The use of the transcendental here differs from Hebbel's use of the superstition concerning the flowing wounds, in that, in the latter case, the subsequent action, or solution of the plot, is not made to depend upon it. Kriemhild already believed in the guilt of Hagen, and we are not to imagine that her desire for revenge was based on this incident, tho it may be counted as one of the things perhaps adding to her bitterness.

The summary dismissal of Gutrune has been criticised and her submissive withdrawal is weak. It has justification, however, in her own feeling of guilt in the previous consciousness that she was causing Siegfried to forget some one. It is excused by some, moreover, on the ground that Wagner for the sake of unity had to sacrifice one heroine. He does not, however, succeed as well as Hebbel in preserving the mythological strength of character common to both women, altho Hebbel drops Brünnhilde early from the scene, as Wagner does Wotan. From the very fact that Heb-

[1]Or may we think that Wotan has risen to the height of breaking his contracts and thus his power to rule the world? Wagner has not seemed to imply this, however.

bel does remove her from the stage he is the better able to preserve this strength thru suggestion without at all taking the chief interest from Kriemhilde.

The situation gives Wagner again the opportunity for the presentation of a series of contradictions: "Aechter als er/ schwur keiner Eide;/ treuer als er/ hielt keiner Verträge;" etc./ Brünnhilde's speech: "Durch seine tapferste That,/ dir so tauglich erwünscht,—/ weihtest du den,/ der sie gewirkt,/ des Verderbens dunkler Gewalt:"/ etc. makes us wonder still more about Wotan's inactivity, tho it is natural that she sould interpret later events in the light of Wotan's need of which Waltraute had told her. We have nevertheless the feeling that Wagner is speaking thru the whole of Brünnhilde's last speech, as he certainly is when she expounds his philosophy.

The symbolism in the purification of the ring by fire is very pretty tho Brünnhilde's return of the ring to the Rhine maids when she is conscious of the significance ought to be sufficient to remove from her the curse and to take away from others the possibility of appropriating it to wrong uses.[1]

Brünnhilde's speech does not relieve the confusion in which we have found ourselves many times. In both the *Entwurf* and in *Siegfrieds Tod* she declares not only the curse resolved but the servitude of Alberich and the other dwarfs at an end and conducts Siegfried to Walhalla. The change in the last rendering shows, of course, the influence of Wagner's later ideas, but in no state of clearness.[2] We are in doubt as to whether the whole world is involved as in the *Edda* but have the impression that only the gods are to be destroyed—a fact that is in conflict with the idea in the destruction of the ash but is more in accord with the action of the drama. (All who have been subjected to the curse have died un-

[1] cf. pp. 21, 47.

[2] cf. pp. 22, 47. Drews (p. 108) says: "Kein Zweifel, dasz heirmit nicht blosz das Reich der Götter untergeht, sondern dasz die Götter dämmerung zugleich das Ende *das Realen überhaupt* bedeutet Brünnhilde's words, then: "des blühenden Lebens bleibend Geschlecht" he accepts as a relic of the earlier conception, tho now inconsistent.

less we interpret the wording of the curse to include everyone since all who did not have the ring should desire it.) The idea that a world that has been accustomed to guidance, of whatever sort it was, should be left to take care of itself, even with the additional message, seems absurd. Are we to suppose now an age of innocence that needs no guide? That does not seem possible.[1]

Her next message is: "Nicht Gut, nicht Gold, selig in Lust und Leid/ läszt—die *Liebe* nur sein,"—/ the conclusion of which seems hardly to imply negation of the will. Critics have objected to thinking of Brünnhilde as the embodiment of redeeming love, an opinion that seems reasonable. It seems rather that her death is neither necessary nor beneficial—the aim is accomplished with the return of the ring to the Rhine, and she does not need to die in order to give it back. Her death is due only to the desolation which makes her life no longer worth living. She is enabled, therefore, to carry out the principle of the negation of the will to live, but it does not involve special heroism or spirit of sacrifice for others. She rises to exultation in her death, but it is from her love to Siegfried.

A still more complete destruction than in the *Edda* is implied in the later ending given by Wagner as the epitome of the whole: "des ew'gen Werdens / off'ne Thore / schliesz' ich hinter mir zu: nach dem wunsch—und wahnlos / heiligstem Wahlland, der Welt-Wanderung Ziel, / von Wiedergeburt erlös't, zieht nun die Wissende hin./ Alles Ew'gen sel'ges Ende / wiszt ihr, wie ich's gewann?/ Trauernder Liebe tiefstes Leiden schlosz die Augen mir auf:/ enden sah ich die Welt." This seems to suggest the end of everything and in nothing, a fact that would make the preceding message useless. We are by no means sure how to interpret the last message. What is this of re-birth, and how extensive is this freedom? What is to become of the rest of mankind? Does she imply a new world to begin, as propheeied in the *Edda*, and this ideal of self-annihilation ending in nothingness

[1]cf. pp. 36-37, 40.

to be attained thru unhappy love as in her case? Truly, I cannot find any healthful or even clear philosophy. Nor has there been preparation thruout the drama for this philosophy of re-birth or freedom from it. It is simply appended, and leaves us in a state of hopeless confusion.

Brünnhilde's last message, as the one preceding it, is, of course, omitted in the stage production, in accordance with Wagner's theory of the function of music to solve the action of the drama thru reflection. He thinks to appeal thru intuition rather than intellect. He does not "pose as a dialectician" and his "only language is Art," he writes to Roeckel, Aug. 23, 1856, concerning this message. He admits that in Brünnhilde's first speech tho "she declares that in love alone is blessedness to be found" she "does not make quite clear what the nature of that Love is, which in the development of the myth we find playing the part of destructive genius." He thinks then that Schopenhauer's philosophy furnishes the keystone of his poem and understands thru Schopenhauer the "difference between intellectual conceptions (Begriff) and intuitions (Anschauung)" and that which he realizes as a truth he does not attempt "to force on others by means of dialectic." He himself cannot be convinced "unless his deepest intuitions have been satisfied" and he thinks, then, that if the truth of what he has spoken is to be brought home to any one, he, the hearer, must have "felt it intuitively before he grasp it intellectually." Musicians do not, however, agree upon the clearness of Wagner's ideas as set forth by the music here but say that confusion has become chaos.

Conclusion.

If we compare the Nibelungen dramas of Wagner and Hebbel, we notice certain similarities of aim. Both make their dramas the vehicle of philosophical ideas, but Wagner leaves us in confusion since he does not succeed in harmonizing his earlier and later conceptions and besides leaves much to the music to perform. Both represent the downfall of a race, but in Wagner we feel it is fortunate that that race is no more; in Hebbel we cannot but regret the departed heroism. Both attempt a conclusion leading the world toward a better state, but Wagner does not convince us that nothingness is a better state (or if we do not accept that interpretation, we do not feel that the world's prospects are more hopeful); in Hebbel we have a definite conception of better things to come. Both make use of the mystical element, Wagner as a means of motivation or as a solution, Hebbel as a background in harmony with the human characters, not always happy as a coloring but never employed as an interference in the plot.

Hebbel's introduction of Christian ideas is not just agreeable to me, but the conflict resulting is consistently carried thru the dramas, while Wagner's philosophical ideas are not clearly or consistently developed. We at first think there is in the person of Wotan a conflict between selfishness and love, then see no result in the victory of the latter (e. g. the redemption of the Goddess of Love). We have no clear idea of where his career of selfishness ends and that of renunciation, or rather negation of will (cf. Chamberlain's *Das Drama Richard Wagner's*, p. 107) begins. Wotan's self conquest in the second act of Rheingold (tho due to fear) ought to lead to something but cannot on account of the situation. But what, then, is the dramatic struggle or development? We find rather a series of scenes and are forced to fill in the development for ourselves. The stages of Wotan's "soul-de-

velopment" are these: He is lost to begin with, fears, realizes that his fear is well grounded (scene with Brünnhilde) and despairs, but finds apparent outlet (in Siegfried), resigns himself to defeat, hopes (in speech to Waltraute), intervenes and defeats Alberich, by the lifted arm. Yet his voluntary fall is from a dissatisfaction with his work (i. e. failure, according to Chamberlain and others, to reconcile love and power). Nevertheless the wrong feeling has been produced on our part, for the outwitting of Alberich would seem to be the first step in the solution of the problem. The fall of Wotan is made necessary thru the epic motivation in the fall of the ash, but this has no vital, at least evident, connection with Wotan's state of mind within the drama.

Wagner's attitude of regarding Siegfried, or Siegfried and Brünnhilde together, as performing the function of a redeemer seems unwarranted. They fill that place only mechanically and not because they rise to any height of unselfish love for the common good. Siegfried's ideal of love is not an exalted one (cf. p. 64) and Brünnhilde gives up her life only when it has no more sweetness. The return of the ring does not involve her death, and the return of the ring seems to have been brought about by Wotan himself who was supposed to be inactive.

We do not feel convinced, moreover, that Wotan in his death has reached any tragic height. He dies only as a despairing criminal, and the work he was too weak and miserable to perform is in just as sad a state as before. Wagner has not succeeded in making nothingness seem a desirable or plausible goal, yet unless that is the solution the world has little to hope. For tho the ring is returned, Alberich lives and the principle of evil is not eliminated from men's minds. What a contrast Wotan presents to such a character as Faust, or to Gyges and Dietrich who do rise to tragic renunciation, who resolve to live, not for the joy of living but without that to spend themselves for others![1]

Tho in some details Hebbel is not happy, we find carried out

[1]Robert's explanation (*Philosophie et Drame*, p. 105) hardly seems satisfactory.

in his *Nibelungen* the broad outlines of a drama of tremendous proportions, an action moving majestically toward a climax of compelling grandeur and dignity that carries one with it whether one will or not. It presents again a contrast to the plan of Wagner who does not have in view from the beginning the end toward which he may consistently work.

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